

MUSLIM LAND, CHRISTIAN LABOR

Transforming
Ottoman Imperial Subjects
into Bulgarian National Citizens,
1878–1939



ANNA M. MIRKOVA

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*Transforming Ottoman Imperial Subjects
into Bulgarian National Citizens, 1878–1939*

ANNA M. MIRKOVA



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¹ The cartoon “Tightening the Grip” is from Caroline and Erwin Swann Collection of Caricature & Cartoon, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-87772.

² The drawing of Demir Baba Tekke included in chapter 7 was made by the Austrian traveler Felix Kanitz and published in his *Donau-Bulgarien und der Balkan: historisch-geographischethnographische Reisestudien aus den Jahren 1860–1875* (Leipzig: H. Fries, 1875). The version I have used appears in the French translation of his travelogue, *La Bulgarie Danubienne et le Balkan: études de voyage (1860–1880)* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et C^{ie}, 1882), on page 533. The digital reproduction of the drawing is available on www.commonswikimedia.org.

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List of Key Ottoman Turkish and Bulgarian Terms

Çiftlik: A farm. The word çift refers to the land workable by a pair of oxen. By the mid-nineteenth century, çiftlik had come to signify, in the Balkans especially, a sizeable landed estate worked by hired labor or tenant farmers.

Dönüm: A unit of measure for land roughly equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ acre

Kâhya: The steward of a çiftlik

Kurush: Ottoman currency, the piaster

Lev: Bulgarian currency

Mahlul: In this book the term refers to landed properties subject to confiscation by the state due to being vacant, abandoned, uncultivated for an extended period of time, or with unclear ownership.

Miri: State land

Mülk: Freehold land

Mütevelli: Trustee of a pious-charitable endowment

Sancak: Subdivision of a province in the Ottoman Empire

Tevhiyet: The trustee office and its funds of a pious-charitable endowment

Uvrat: A unit of measure for land (without standard value) used in the Ottoman Balkans

Vakıf: Muslim pious-charitable endowment

Vilayet: Province in the Ottoman Empire

Note on Names, Transliterations, and Dates

Geographical Names

I use the Ottoman Turkish names for villages, cities, and administrative units in the first three chapters. I have provided the Bulgarian equivalent after a slash (/). In chapters 4 through 7 I use the Bulgarian names only. My motivation for doing so is twofold. I have aimed for simplicity so that the prose would not be overburdened with excessively long names. At the same time, however, geographical names indicate sovereignty and carry cultural meanings. My choice of names has followed the transition from Ottoman imperial to Bulgarian national sovereignty. Practically this means that after the unification in 1885 between Eastern Rumelia (an administratively autonomous Ottoman province) and the Principality of Bulgaria (under Ottoman suzerainty until 1908), I have opted for the Bulgarian names.

Personal Names

Some of the Turkish names are rendered in Bulgarian form, e.g., Takanov rather than Takanoğlu. I have usually used that form when my primary sources come exclusively from the Bulgarian archives.

Transliterations from Ottoman Turkish and Bulgarian

I have generally followed the transliteration system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* for Ottoman Turkish words, though I have simplified it by mostly omitting the various diacritics. For Bulgarian

words, I have generally followed the system of the Library of Congress, though I have deviated from it for easily recognizable names in English. Thus, I write Sofia rather than Sofiiia.

Dates

Until the First World War Bulgaria followed the Julian calendar, which was twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days behind it in the twentieth century. In the first five chapters I have either provided both dates or retained the original date.

For Ottoman Turkish and Turkish periodicals that used the Hijri and/or Rumi calendar, I have provided in parenthesis the date according to the Gregorian calendar. Likewise, I have converted the Hijri or Rumi dates in Ottoman documents according to the Gregorian calendar.

Introduction

In the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire lost most of its European dominions through a combination of revolts, wars with Russia, and the interventions of other Great Powers ostensibly for humanitarian reasons. Imperial sovereignty was thus parsed into nation-states. The emergence of post-Ottoman Bulgaria—the geographical backdrop of this book—is an example of this process. In the last few decades, scholars examining the transition from empire to nation have illustrated that national identities were constructed, malleable, temporally contingent and situational.¹ Tending to focus on language and religion, they have argued that particularly minorities (if not

¹ For the Ottoman Empire, see Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Roumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004). For the Hapsburg Empire, see Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). Kemal H. Karpat “The Balkan National States and Nationalism: Image and Reality,” in *Studies in Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 434–72, also points out the limited national consciousness among Bulgarian Christians in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

coerced) both chose citizenship due to pragmatic considerations and defined belonging in constant negotiation with the hegemonic nation.² Building on the insights of this scholarship *Muslim Land, Christian Labor* nonetheless opens a different lens to this process of identity formation in the transition from empire to nation. It argues that the dialectical process of hegemonic national identity–minority national identity formation unfolded through momentous changes in land use and ownership, which engendered new economic, social, political, and cultural relationships that transformed Ottoman Muslims since the late nineteenth century into Bulgaria’s Turkish national minority by the middle of the twentieth century.³

Land, and especially that associated with Muslims, became the prime material and symbolic resource for national integration as well as for the country’s developing capitalist economy. The period spanning the late nineteenth century until the outbreak of the Second World War was decisive both for the articulation of “minority” as a political category and for inscribing Muslims onto the matrix of national citizenship in Christian-majority states. Therefore, by explaining how Muslims became national minorities the present study fills a gap in the scholarship on Balkan Muslims, which has either paid attention largely to the period after the Second World War or, while invaluable on the historical experiences of Muslims, assumes “minority” as a static category.⁴ Finally my analysis

² See Mary Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), and Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands: Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900–1949* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

³ The extremely valuable book by William McGrew, *Land and Revolution in Modern Greece, 1800–1881: The Transition in the Tenure and Exploitation of Land from Ottoman Rule to Independence* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), does not connect land and identity formation.

⁴ This more contemporary focus is evident in the recent studies by Kristen Ghodsee, *Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Transformation of Islam in Postsocialist Bulgaria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Ina Merdjanova, *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Neuburger’s *The Orient Within* spans not only the communist period but also analyzes how Muslims negotiated with the official modernization ideology, particularly in the 1930s. Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria* (New York: Routledge, 1997), while attentive to the differences among Muslim communities focuses primarily on the communist and postcommunist periods. The edited volumes by Mark Pinson, *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, MA:

of how and why Muslim lands were transferred to Bulgarian Christians and/or the state deepens our understanding of the contingent nature of Muslim–Christian relations in the post-Ottoman world.

★ ★ ★

Modern Bulgaria first emerged after the war between the Ottoman and Russian Empires in 1877–78. Russia's victorious armies charted a sizeable Bulgarian state that stretched north to south from the Danube River to the Aegean Sea and west to east from Serbia to the Black Sea. Muslims fled the advancing Russian armies during the war, abandoning houses and agricultural plots. Neighboring Bulgarian Christians or others who ran away from the Ottoman armies seized the abandoned Muslim properties. These wartime migrations and land misappropriations subsided when the other Great Powers threatened Russia with war if she refused to reduce in size the Bulgarian state just created. Militarily and financially exhausted, Russia agreed to a peace conference held in Berlin. The resulting Treaty of Berlin (July 1878) returned the region of Macedonia to the Ottoman Empire and divided the remaining Russian conquests in the Ottoman Balkans into two new polities. The first one was the Principality of Bulgaria where the Ottoman sultan was only *de jure* the suzerain. The second one was the administratively autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia, where the sultan remained the sovereign. However, the governor of Eastern Rumelia was a Bulgarian Christian who ruled with an elected legislature. Ottoman territorial integrity and status with the European family of nations was irreparably damaged, making its sovereignty greatly dependent on the self-serving decisions of the Great Powers. Meanwhile, Bulgarian nationalists saw the treaty as pure injustice. Their patron, Russia, was stalled in its pursuit of controlling the Black Sea and the Straits.⁵

Harvard University Press, 1994) and Kemal H. Karpat, *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1990), analyze different aspects of Muslim life in Christian-majority settings but do not present a systematic explanation of the historical process leading to formation of national minorities. The same holds true for Kemal H. Karpat, "The Muslim Minority in the Balkans," in *Studies in Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 523–42. A rather static view of the category of "minority" can be seen in Bilal Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria (1878–1985)* (London: K. Rustem & Brother, 1988), and K. G. Andreades *The Moslem Minority in Western Thrace* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1980 [1956]).

⁵ On Russia's involvement in the Balkans, see esp. Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

When the principality took over the province in 1885, migrations and land transfers (planned and chaotic) occurred again, but this time the government of unified Bulgaria made efforts to discover abandoned Muslim lands in Eastern Rumelia as well as to buy lands from emigrating Muslims. This move aimed to accrue profit to the state treasury by leasing such lands. Migrations and land transfers occurred yet again after the proclamation of complete Bulgarian independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1908, during the Balkan Wars (1912–13), as well as during and after the First World War. At the same time Bulgarian Christians immigrated to Bulgaria from the disintegrating Ottoman Empire and some of its former dominions, including newly established Turkey. After each of these dramatic events Bulgarian statesmen also developed strategies and legal measures to control and extract profit from the lands of Muslim refugees and emigrants as well as from the lands of Muslim pious-charitable endowments (*vakıf*). Ultimately, as I argue in this book, Bulgarian governments viewed lands associated with Muslims as serving a few entwined nation-building goals. First, through sales, leases, and the creation of a state land fund, “Muslim lands” were expected to help generate capital for the emergent national economy. Second, it was up to the modernized labor of Bulgarian Christians to produce the capital inhering in “Muslim lands.” Finally, they had to absorb landless, poor, or refugee Bulgarian Christians whose very presence was supposed to secure especially Bulgaria’s ethnically and religiously mixed southern borderlands. In short, official visions for progress hinged upon loyal Bulgarian Christian citizens and a domesticated Muslim minority.

These population movements and property transfers formed part of a broader historical trend. The breakup of the Ottoman Empire into nation-states during the nineteenth century through the Balkan Wars, the First World War, and the War for Turkish Independence (1919–22) brought about a large (and to these days, traumatic) demographic transformation. Many Ottoman peoples fled, were forcibly sent to the emerging nation-state claiming to be their natural home, or became victims of genocide. In the Balkans, the starkest example of how migrations became instrumental in nation-state building comes from the population exchange between Greece and the defunct Ottoman Empire-cum-Turkish Republic.⁶ It

⁶ Stephen P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (New York: Macmillan, 1932); Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919–1922*, 2nd ed. (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1998); Onur Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations* (London: Routledge, 2006).

was ratified internationally at Lausanne in 1923 and demanded of over a million people to leave their homes just as many others had done during the war. Regulated migrations, albeit on a smaller scale, occurred between Bulgaria and Greece as well as between Bulgaria and Turkey.⁷ The Greco-Turkish population exchange, the Armenian genocide as well as the internal deportations of the Kurds in early republican Turkey revealed that state builders employed migration to fortify borders, thus linking national sovereignty to a homogenous population.⁸

Southern Bulgaria (roughly former Eastern Rumelia)—the prime focus of this book—was the region of the country most deeply affected by such migrations as well as border adjustments. It was populated by dense settlements of Turkish- and Slavic-speaking Muslims (Pomaks) and bordered Greece and Turkey. Especially after the foundation of Turkey, Bulgarian officials feared that Turkish nationalist ideas would foster irredentism among Bulgaria's Turkish Muslims while encouraging the Pomaks to identify as Turkish rather than Bulgarian. To prevent this from happening, Bulgarian governments tried to control landownership in the southern borderlands by settling Bulgarian Christian refugees or others from the interior of the country in the places that Turkish Muslims had left. Hence the fluid borders and mixed Bulgarian and Turkish populations of southern Bulgaria made the region, as this book contends, a central site of nation-building efforts. Consequently, questions of who owned land and where defined both national sovereignty as well as the relationship between the emergent Bulgarian state and its citizens, the hegemonic Bulgarians, on one hand, and the minority Turks, on the other.

Struggles about the material as well as symbolic possession of land broadly sketch the structure of my argument. I rely on scholars who point out that establishing a “natural” connection between nation and terri-

⁷ See Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*; see also Kalina Peeva, “Ankarskite Spogodbi—Diplomaticheski Uspekh ili Otstüplenie ot Bülgarskite Interesi,” *Istorichesko Büdeshte* 1–2 (2006): 117–40; Valeri Stoyanov, *Turskoto naselenie v Bülgariia mezhdü poliusite na etnicheskata politika* (Sofia: LIK, 1998).

⁸ Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement*; Lerna Ekmekçiğolu, “Republic of Paradox: The League of Nations Minority Protection Regime and the New Turkey's Step-Citizens,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 4 (2014): 657–79, and “A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 3 (2013): 522–53; Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

tory, i.e., between ethnic and political boundaries, is a fundamental tool of nation building.⁹ As historian Diana Mishkova has argued, nation building in the Balkans (and nineteenth-century Europe, more generally) was based on irredentism—the conception of liberating and unifying people from different territories in one nation-state.¹⁰ Sociologist Victor Roudometof maintains that Balkan politicians, intellectuals, and nationalist organizations legitimized nation-building projects by “manipulat[ing] symbolic boundaries in order to produce collective redefinition of parts of the Ottoman Empire as ‘unredeemed’ territories.”¹¹ This kind of irredentist nation-state building helped define Muslims in Bulgaria as a distinct Turkish national minority or as Bulgarian Muslims poised for assimilation. Land also symbolized the resources of the imperial past over which Turkish Muslims and Bulgarian Christians competed as statesmen devised policies for economic modernization.¹²

The core of my analysis focuses on how landownership was transformed in post-Ottoman Bulgaria. Specifically, I examine the changes both among individual Muslims as well as with respect to pious-charitable endowments, the *vakıfs*. The status of Turkish Muslim landholders was threatened and diminished due to changes in taxation, measures to clarify

⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Diana Mishkova, “The Interesting Anomaly of Bulgarian Liberalism,” in *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Imperial Heritages and Liberal Nationalisms in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ivan Denes (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 406.

¹¹ Victor Roudometof, “Invented Traditions, Symbolic Boundaries, and National Identity in Southeastern Europe: Greece and Serbia in Comparative Historical Perspective (1830–1880),” *East European Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1999): 429, and “The Social Origin of Balkan Politics: Nationalism, Underdevelopment, and the Nation-State in Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria, 1880–1920,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (2000): 144–63.

¹² On the importance of controlling land resources and landed property in nation-state building, see, for example, McGrew, *Land and Revolution*; Kenneth W. Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), as well as *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

the ownership of lands abandoned during war and emigration, economic hardship, and the settlement of Bulgarian Christian refugees or impoverished peasants. *Vakıfs* underwent substantial changes as well. Overall, *vakıfs* supported Muslim religious and cultural practices in the Ottoman Empire while also providing essential public services to all subjects.¹³ The establishment of *vakıfs* in the newly conquered Balkan territories had facilitated the rooting of Ottoman sovereignty as well. Rent from endowments' real estate and agricultural land, in addition to portions of urban and rural taxes, sustained the *vakıfs* financially. This link between *vakıfs* and imperial sovereignty motivated the Eastern Rumelian and Bulgarian authorities to try to control and dismantle the endowments. This was accomplished by denying income from taxes to the trustees of the endowments since taxation became the prerogative of the Bulgarian nation on its way to achieve full sovereignty. Over time Bulgarian governments developed special regulations about managing *vakıfs* as well as all other religious, cultural, and educational institutions connected to Turkish Muslims, which in one way or another depended on the diminishing wealth of *vakıfs*. The development and application of these regulations placed Turkish Muslims under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs. Thus, changes in land tenure advanced a conception of national citizenship in which, despite individual (male) legal equality, Turkish Muslims and Bulgarian Christians carried out distinct roles as members of communities.

This tension between group identity and individual politicization perhaps could be read as reflecting the inherent tension in the national state "between the universalism of an egalitarian legal community and the particularism of a cultural community bound together by origin and fate."¹⁴ In a way, though, specific policies and attitudes toward Turkish Muslims in nascent Bulgaria forged an experience of shared fate—vestiges of the Ottoman imperial past that posed hurdles to Bulgarian national sovereignty. Also, this tension was perpetuated by the economic vision of Bulgarian statesmen—creating movable wealth from agriculture that could be

¹³ See Randi Deguilhem, "Wakf: IV. In the Ottoman Empire to 1914," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, 2nd ed. (Brill Online, 2014), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/wakf-COM_1333; Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, "The European Nation-state—Its Achievements and Its Limits: On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship," in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 1996), 287.

invested in the industrialization of the economy. Hence lands associated with Muslims and the agricultural labor of Bulgarian Christians became important motors for Bulgaria's turbulent industrialization. But in the absence of robust indigenous capital, "Muslim land" and "Christian labor" were supplemented with loans from international creditors on whom Bulgaria became progressively dependent (economically and politically).¹⁵ In other words, the breakdown of late Ottoman land tenure supported the establishment of Bulgarian sovereignty and aided in generating some capital for Bulgarian industrialization. But this process ultimately provoked ethno-religious antagonisms, encouraged rival Bulgarian and Turkish nationalisms as well as the political marginalization of Turkish Muslims.

Bulgarian statesmen were acutely aware of their country's inferior position—diplomatically and financially—in the international arena vis-à-vis the European empires. Historian Diana Mishkova has argued that state builders in the post-Ottoman Balkans experienced their time as one of catching up by simultaneously having to build a nation-state and to modernize it.¹⁶ Bulgarian state builders often grafted their understandings of backwardness onto Muslims in order to develop and justify certain land and agricultural policies. As historian Mary Neuburger has shown, Bulgarian governments in the second half of the 1930s and during the socialist period set up modernizing campaigns for Muslims, sometimes with their active participation. These campaigns focused on erasing Ottoman and Turkish symbols from the Bulgarian national space. Hence efforts to prevent men from wearing the fez, to de-veil women, or to compel both to adopt Slavic Christian names ultimately served state agendas for national homogenization as well as the elevation of Bulgarians as the civilized population.¹⁷

Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria were not mere passive recipients of official policy, however, nor did they resign themselves to the stigmatization that they could not live in the modern society afforded by Bulgaria's

¹⁵ The following studies are very useful in understanding what role international loans played in Bulgarian history: Tsvetana Todorova, *Diplomateska Istoriia na Vŭnshnite Zaemi, 1888–1912* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1971); Asen Chakalov, *Formi, Razmer i Deinost na Chuzhdiia Kapital v Bŭlgariia, 1878–1944* (Sofia: BAN, 1962); Simeon Damianov, *Bŭlgariia vŭv Frenskata Politika 1878–1918* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1985); Roumen Avramov, *Komunalniat Kapitalizŭm: Iz Bŭlgarskoto Stopansko Minalo*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Tsentŭr za Liberalni Strategii, 2007).

¹⁶ Diana Mishkova, *Prisposobiavane na Svobodata. Modernost-legitimnost v Sŭrbiia i Rumŭniia prez XIX vek* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2001).

¹⁷ Neuburger, *The Orient Within*.

foundation. Since the mid-1890s Turkish Muslims began fighting against their tacit identification with putative Ottoman backwardness as well as with manifestations of Turkish Muslims lagging behind Bulgarian Christians. In conversation with the Young Turk movement in the Ottoman Empire, a young generation of Bulgarian Muslim reformers developed a modernizing agenda. By the outbreak of the Balkan Wars Bulgaria's Muslims had already become polarized over the meanings of modernity and the development of Turkish nationalism.¹⁸ The reformers criticized frequent discrimination against Muslims, instances of aggressive Bulgarian nationalism, the scarcity of adequate modern education in Turkish, and the passivity of the ordinary Muslim population. They worked to mobilize Muslims as a nation existing within the Bulgarian nation-state.

Disagreements and conflicts among Bulgaria's Turkish-speaking Muslims intensified after the Ottoman Empire collapsed in the First World War and its successor Turkey adopted nationalism and modernization as an ideology of state building, named Kemalism, after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk—the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic. Kemalist ideology prompted Bulgaria's Muslims to reevaluate their place in the country in relation to the emergent Turkish nation-state. The big question was whether to define themselves as Turks belonging to the Turkish nation (*millet*) or as, the equally modern, supranational Islamic community (*cemiyet*), which also carried the values of Ottoman civilization. Answers to this question unfolded as rivalries among Turkish Muslims over the management of the institutions created for them by the various special regulations on Muslims since Bulgaria's inception. They fought especially over the resources of *vakıfs* because schools depended on them in large measure. This was important for sympathizers and opponents of Kemalism in Bulgaria because at stake was introducing, modifying, or rejecting the revolutionary changes adopted in Turkey.

¹⁸ Specifically for Bulgaria, see Milena Bogomilova Methodieva, "Reform, Politics and Culture among the Muslims in Bulgaria, 1878–1908" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010); Osman Keskiöğlu, *Bulgaristan'da Türkler: Tarih ve Kültür* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1985), and Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*. For the Ottoman Empire more broadly, see David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876–1908* (London: Cass, 1977); Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992); M. Şükrü Hani-oglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), and *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

A complicating factor in the conflicts among Turkish Muslims was the involvement of the Bulgarian authorities. They sided with the opponents of Kemalist Turkey for they believed that the growth of Turkish nationalism in Bulgaria would lead, in the event of a future war, to territorial losses. This belief was supported by the post-World War I political order that transpired after the Versailles Peace Conference. New nation-states emerged from the ashes of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. The borders of existing ones were modified or populations transferred in order to achieve maximal national homogeneity for the purpose, ostensibly, of peace and security. Hence, from the viewpoint of interwar Bulgarian governments, a nationally conscious Turkish population in the borderlands of southern Bulgaria was a harbinger of detrimental territorial modification. This is the context in which Bulgarian authorities desired the emigration of the country's Turkish Muslim population. They worked with immigration quotas set by the early republican Turkish government whose statesmen strove to achieve national homogeneity as well. But they were less interested in Muslims from the shared borderland with Bulgaria than from the country's interior. To counter Turkey's state-building agenda, Bulgarian governments worked to settle Bulgarian Christians in the south by employing socio-economic policies designed to resolve land pressures and poverty. They also tried to nationalize the Pomaks of southern Bulgaria and prevent them from immigrating to Turkey. Finally, they monitored the movements of Turkish Muslims across the border so as to hinder the dissemination of Kemalism.

Throughout the interwar years Turkish Muslims dealt with pressures to emigrate or to take a side in the battles between the detractors and proponents of Kemalism. Thus, the boundaries of Turkish Muslims as a minority in Bulgaria were drawn out through clashes over every aspect of communal life. Moreover, the reappraisal of the history of the Ottoman state in early republican Turkey provoked Bulgaria's Turkish Muslims to reevaluate and rewrite "their" history inside and outside the Ottoman Empire. They struggled to inscribe their Ottoman pasts in Bulgaria's national present in order to justify their rootedness in the territories Bulgarians claimed as exclusively theirs. By taking part in the reconceptualization of the Ottoman past, Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria also tried to define the terms of modern Muslim subjectivity.

The following chapters explore in greater detail the argument and themes outlined above. Chapter 1, "The Eastern Crisis, Russia's 'Civilizing Mission' in the Balkans, and the Emergence of Eastern Rumelia"

explains the nineteenth-century international and Ottoman domestic political contexts in which Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria emerged. It shows how the Great Powers tempered their imperial rivalries by endowing Eastern Rumelia with a political structure based on power sharing among ethno-religious groups. The chapter then analyzes the temporary Russian occupation and its consequences for Eastern Rumelia.

The second chapter, “Repatriation, Postwar Reconstruction, and the Limits of Pluralism in Eastern Rumelia,” explains how Bulgarian Christians in the administration of Eastern Rumelia employed administrative and legal measures to dismantle Ottoman land tenure, thus control Muslim postwar repatriation, ultimately defying Ottoman sovereignty.

The third chapter, “An Experiment in Pluralistic Governance: Emigration and the Emergence of National Politics,” shows how the flaws of repatriation, coupled with the introduction of a land tax sparked Muslim emigration. Thus, the changing demography of the province undermined the pluralistic political model of Eastern Rumelia, enabling Bulgarian Christians to begin establishing national hegemony. In 1885, following a coup and an uprising, the principality annexed the province amid triumphant nationalism, soon to be followed by a brief war and years-long diplomatic isolation.

The fourth chapter, “Anchoring Unified Bulgaria on ‘Muslim’ Land,” discusses how Muslim landownership was threatened by the modernization of agriculture, a process that entailed land consolidation as well as bringing new lands under cultivation, which either lacked clear ownership status or were abandoned by emigrating Muslims. I explain how lands associated with Muslims became important to the economy of the principality as well as its bids to full sovereignty.

At the same time, Bulgarian Christian peasants were encouraged to mechanize and increase the profit from their labor in order to spawn industrial development. However, as Chapter 5, “Muslim Land vs. Bulgarian Labor: The Cost of Building a Modern Capitalist Nation,” shows, this economic vision also involved taking loans, which weighed heavily on the population especially because the money was spent on making unfavorable debt payments and building a large army to realize irredentist ambitions. By the time Bulgaria proclaimed its independence in 1908 the country was polarized along a rural–urban axis, leading to the emergence of a Bulgarian agrarian populist movement. Bulgaria also became polarized along ethno-religious lines as the budding Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Empire inspired Bulgaria’s Muslims to fight back against their marginalization.

The sixth chapter, “Land, Nation, Minority,” focuses on the rebuilding of Bulgaria in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars and First World War. This decade of warfare caused massive population displacement that altered the demography of many post-Ottoman states with lasting social and political implications. As Bulgarian Christian refugees from Ottoman-cum-Turkish territory poured into southern Bulgaria, the country’s Turkish Muslim citizens once again faced loss of land and pressure to emigrate. This time Turkish statesmen selectively desired immigrants to build their young nation. The Bulgarian authorities almost invariably linked Turkish Muslims to the ascent of the neighboring Turkish Republic, which embarked on fast-paced modernization and the nationalization of former Ottoman Muslims. By the outbreak of the Second World War, national sovereignty and the ethno-religious homogeneity of a piece of land had become mutually constitutive.

The last chapter, “Debating Community and Citizenship,” examines the conflicts among Bulgaria’s Turkish Muslims over Turkey’s nation-building project and its relevance to their lives. I analyze these conflicts by examining the power struggles within the Muslim Confessional Organizations (MCOs) to which all Muslims were required to belong. I then trace the efforts of Kemalist sympathizers and opponents to construct a usable Ottoman past to serve as a guide in the Bulgarian national present. This comes to the fore in the dispute over an Ottoman dervish lodge between Bulgarian archeologists and several ministries on one hand and Turkish Muslims on the other. Each side used the lodge to parse the Ottoman past in order to assemble a historical tradition that aimed to demonstrate that either Bulgarians or Turks were “there first.”

CHAPTER ONE

The Eastern Crisis, Russia's "Civilizing Mission" in the Balkans, and the Emergence of Eastern Rumelia

On 20 April/2 May 1876¹ the nationalist fighter Todor Kableshkov and an armed band of Bulgarian Christian men proclaimed the beginning of a Bulgarian national uprising in the Ottoman Balkan mountain town of Koprivshtitsa. Their announcement came ten days earlier than originally planned by the Plovdiv/Filibe regional revolutionary committee, which was based in the town of Panagiurishte. The date and the military strategy had been set across the Danube in the Romanian city of Giurgiu, where the central revolutionary committee had its headquarters, even though the leaders of the regional committees enjoyed flexibility so as to better respond to conditions on the ground. The central committee had been formed in late fall 1875 just as the uprising of Christians in Ottoman Herzegovina and Bosnia was turning into an international diplomatic crisis,² the infamous Eastern Crisis (1875–78) that stemmed from what European statesmen called the “Eastern Question.”

At its core, the “Eastern Question” was about the territorial, strategic, and commercial ambitions of Russia, Austria, Great Britain, and France over the Ottoman dominions. These ambitions betrayed the waning military capacities of the Ottoman armies since the eighteenth century as well as the European powers’ sense of civilizational superiority. Historians generally attribute the origins of the “Eastern Question” to the

¹ The date 20 April is according to the Julian calendar. In the nineteenth century the Julian calendar was twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar.

² Ogniana P. Mazhdrakova-Chavdarova, *Natsionalno-revoliutsionni Borbi na Bŭlgarskiia Narod, 1828–1878* (Sofia: ABAGAR, 1997), 225–28, 235.

Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), which ended a six-year war in which Russia defeated the Ottoman Empire. Believing (or perhaps hoping) that Ottoman demise was near, European rulers began scheming how to divvy up territory and influence among themselves. Their confidence stemmed also in part from a series of grave Ottoman military losses to Austria and its allies at the close of the seventeenth century. Those ended with the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699), which permanently expelled the Ottomans from Hungary and solidified Austria as the major power in central and eastern Europe.³

The Eastern Crisis developed at a time when the principle governing international relations entailed the balance of power among states, as articulated at the Congress of Vienna (1815), so that Europe's collective security would be maintained.⁴ With respect to the Ottoman Empire, balance of power had come to mean—after the Treaty of Paris (1856)—that the empire's territorial integrity was guaranteed so that none of the Great Powers of Europe and Russia would obtain leverage at the expense of the others. Tense diplomacy in Europe, imperial rivalries and short wars in Asia and Africa marked the relations among the Great Powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the Ottoman Balkans it was especially Russian and Austrian imperial ambitions that clashed. None of the Great Powers wished to go to war in the region when the uprising in Herzegovina and Bosnia threatened to engulf the Ottoman Balkans in turmoil and perhaps even redraw the borders of the empire. Instead, the Great Powers preferred diplomatic maneuvers that came to be known as the Eastern Crisis. Nonetheless, it was a short war (April 1877 – March 1878) between the Russian and Ottoman Empires that ended the Eastern Crisis. As will become clear shortly, the suppression of the uprising that began in Koprivshtitsa, known as the April Uprising, precipitated the beginning of the Russo-Ottoman War, the third major war in the nineteenth century between the two empires. Resulting in Ottoman defeat and peace negotiations that involved all the Great Powers, this war sharply reduced Ottoman dominions in the Balkans and ultimately led to the establishment of the Principality of Bulgaria and the autonomous Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia.

³ Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 319–23.

⁴ Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 18–36.

Eastern Rumelia emerged, as I show in this chapter, at a time when the Great Powers evaluated the implementation of the Ottoman reforms, known as the Tanzimat, to circumscribe, uphold, or terminate Ottoman sovereignty. From this perspective, the Bosnia-Herzegovina and April uprisings symbolized ineffective reforms, more specifically the failure of Tanzimat statesmen to provide good government that would ensure legal equality, dissolve Muslim-Christian antagonisms, and encourage prosperity among Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Eastern Rumelia's creation was thus an example of Great Power intervention that limited Ottoman sovereignty to ostensibly remedy misrule while assuaging imperial tensions heightened by the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78. Equipped with an Organic Statute and administrative structure that would presumably safeguard Muslims and Christians, Eastern Rumelia reflected the logic of earlier Great Power efforts to “civilize” Ottoman society by essentially diminishing the sultan's sovereignty. In the guise of humanitarian intervention, this was done after the Greek Revolt (1821), then after the bloody Muslim-Christian clashes in Mount Lebanon and Damascus (1860), and then after the revolt (1866) of Christians in Crete.⁵ There, as in Eastern Rumelia, the Great Powers guarded their interests by designating and offering patronage to specific ethno-religious groups.⁶

Eastern Rumelia, however, also differed in important ways. As we will see below, it was the product of the Russo-Ottoman War whose end was set by two radically different peace treaties—the Treaty of San Stefano (March 1878) and the Treaty of Berlin (July 1878). The first satisfied the ambitions of Bulgarian nationalists and those of their patron Russia. The second, it will become apparent in this book, frustrated nationalist aspirations in ways that profoundly shaped the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman Balkans until the Second World War. The Treaty of Berlin also curtailed Russian imperial expansion into Ottoman dominions. Finally, the other distinguishing characteristic of Eastern Rumelia was that Russia's occupation and temporary rule of that new province determined how it functioned. In this sense the fact that part of the Russian army as well as civilian officials remained with diplomatic sanction months after the war proved more consequential than the arrival of

⁵ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 63–141.

⁶ Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

French troops in Mount Lebanon after the conflict. There Fuad Pasha, the Ottoman envoy extraordinary (appointed with Great Power approval), skillfully frustrated and undermined any authority claimed by General Beaufort d'Hautpoul on behalf of the French.⁷ Not so in the Russian-occupied territories, where Prince Cherkaskii and General Prince Dondukov-Korsakov designed ad hoc land tenure and refugee settlement policies that ultimately increased the leverage of Bulgarian Christians. Let me now turn to the Russo-Ottoman War, the Russian occupation, and the setting up of Eastern Rumelia.

THE APRIL UPRISING AND OTTOMAN REFORMS

The cause of the Bosnia-Herzegovina and April uprisings, according to the powers, was the failure of the Tanzimat to improve the lives of Christians by advancing equality, rational government, and prosperity. By August 1875 the Ottoman troops had failed to contain the spread of the revolt from Herzegovina to Bosnia and then struggled to suppress the insurgents. Ottoman troops successfully prevented a group of Bulgarian rebels in September from spreading the insurrection further east. But Sultan Abdülaziz I's offers for tax reductions in exchange for laying down arms did not yield peace.⁸ Meanwhile, Austria-Hungary and Russia rushed to propose reforms to the Sublime Porte⁹ which were supposed to alleviate the economic and social conditions of the Christian peasants. While the revolt in Herzegovina and Bosnia and the attendant international diplomacy unfolded, the central committee of Bulgarian revolutionaries based in the Romanian city of Giurgiu decided that the climate was ripe for a Bulgarian national uprising.¹⁰ This was despite the fact that in September 1875 the revolt in Zăgra-i Atîk/Stara Zagora area, parts of Şumnu/Shumen, Rusçuk/Ruse, and a few other areas had fumbled, leading to much disillusionment

⁷ Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 107–31.

⁸ F. A. K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers, 1878–1888* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1996), 13.

⁹ In Ottoman Turkish Bâb-ı âli: The gate leading to the seat of the grand vizier and the imperial government.

¹⁰ See Nikolai Todorov, "Aprilskoto Vŭstanie i Negovoto Miesto v Iztochnata Kriza (1875–1878)," in *Aprilskoto Vŭstanie i Negovoto Miesto v Iztochnata Kriza (1875–1878)*, ed. Nikolai Todorov and Simeon Damianov (Sofia: BAN, 1977), 14.

among Bulgarian nationalist activists as well as to the disarray of the long-standing revolutionary committee in Bucharest.¹¹

Todor Kableshev hastened to declare the beginning of the uprising because he hoped it would gather momentum before the arrival of the two cavalry units of the Ottoman police, which had been dispatched from the city of Filibe/Plovdiv (the seat of the *sancak*, i.e., district) to Koprivshtitsa and from the city of Tatar Pazarcık/Tatar Pazardzhik to Panagiuershte.¹² Earlier that month, in the midst of hectic preparations for the upcoming revolt, the regional revolutionary committee had called a general meeting of delegates in the woods of Oborishte at which all agreed that should the Ottoman authorities discover the plot, revolutionaries could begin the uprising earlier than the planned date of 1 May/13 May. The Ottoman authorities were on the alert for suspicious activities because armed bands of Bulgarian nationalist fighters had been roaming the Balkans since the 1860s while having permanent headquarters in Serbian and Romanian cities from which to plan a national uprising.¹³ The Serbian government maintained close contacts with the revolutionaries as they both envisioned a joint Serb–Bulgarian state. Russia aided Serbia in training small contingents situated near the border from where to launch attacks. Since most revolutionaries lived in areas of Serbia and Romania close to the Ottoman Empire proper, their incursions often took place north of the Balkan mountain range. There in the pilot Tanzimat *vilayet* (province) of Tuna/Danube, the governor, Midhat Pasha, put to work the police in 1866 and 1867 to catch, bring to trial at extraordinary tribunals, execute or exile armed bands (*cheti*) of Bulgarian men. He also developed a well-functioning spy network to track their plans and activities.¹⁴

Yet Ottoman officials learned specifically about the plans for the April Uprising thanks to leaks by Bulgarian Christians who knew, to various degrees, that a revolt was in the works.¹⁵ Nenko Stoianov from

¹¹ Khristo Gandev, *Aprilskoto Vŭstanie, 1876* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1974), 88–92; Nikolai Todorov, “Aprilskoto Vŭstanie i Negovoto Miesto v Iztochnata Kriza (1875–1878 g.),” 14–15; Doyno Doinov, “Starozagorskoto Vŭstanie i Sŭbitiata na Balkanite prez 1875,” in *Aprilskoto Vŭstanie i Iztochnata Kriza 1875–1878*, 29–38.

¹² See Dimitŭr T. Strashimirov, *Istoriia na Aprilskoto Vŭzstanie* (Plovdiv: Plovdivska Okrŭzhna Postoianna Komisiia, 1907), 282.

¹³ Mazhdrakova-Chavdarova, *Natsionalno-revoliutsionni Borbi*, 101–224, 235.

¹⁴ Milen V. Petrov, “*Tanzimat* for the Countryside: Midhat Paša and the *Vilayet* of Danube, 1864–1868,” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006), 399–415.

¹⁵ See Strashimirov, *Istoriia na Aprilskoto*, 268–87.

the village of Baldiuvo, which was situated in the hinterland of the city of Tatar Pazarcık, has stood for the betrayal as well as the shame of betrayal in Bulgarian popular histories and the historiography.¹⁶ He was the *kâhya* (the steward) of a couple of *çiftliks* (large agricultural farms) owned by absentee Turkish Muslim landlords in the hinterland of the city of Tatar Pazarcık. He used the position of a farm steward to accumulate wealth of his own which advanced his social standing with the local elites, including Turkish Muslim ones. Stoianov attended the meeting at Oborishte, where the final preparations for the revolution were made thanks to his friends from another village.¹⁷ According to Dimităr Strashimirov—the author of the first detailed and researched history of the April Uprising who also interviewed surviving contemporaries—neither Stoianov nor his friends were sincerely committed to the cause. Strashimirov suggested that as an aspiring member of the elite Stoianov may have wished to be in the know so as to act in his, his family's, and his relatives' best interest and even save the village from reprisals. He did accomplish these goals, albeit at the expense of the lives of others.¹⁸ Upon leaving the meeting Stoianov informed the authorities in Tatar Pazarcık, who telegraphed the intelligence to the district capital of Filibe as well as to the provincial capital of Edirne.¹⁹

Stoianov's actions are also indicative of longer-term antagonisms among Bulgarian Christians in the Ottoman Empire along socioeconomic and generational cleavages. Strashimirov wrote that the *chorbadzhii*—i.e., the Bulgarian Christian elite—of the town of Koprivshtitsa disapproved of revolution; among them was also the uncle of Todor Kableshkov—the revolutionary who announced its beginning. The *chorbadzhii* had apparently planned to inform the Filibe district governor (*mutasarrıf*) about the preparations for an uprising thereby perhaps even preventing its outbreak. Their messenger did not make it to Filibe, though an Ottoman spy who was a Bulgarian Christian divulged the decision of the *chorbadzhii* to the

¹⁶ Ibid., 271. Strashimirov, who interviewed surviving contemporaries, concludes his lengthy, picturesque description of the landscape in which Baldiuvo was situated with the following: “And above this heavenly nest today weighs the contempt of an entire generation, of the entire nation: it [Baldiuvo] is the homeland of the biggest traitor in our new history. The unfortunate Baldiuvo villagers feel this; they meet the stern look of the outsider guilty and humiliated” (p. 274).

¹⁷ Ibid., 275, 277.

¹⁸ This is what Strashimirov suggests in *ibid.*, 276–79.

¹⁹ Gandev, *Aprilsfoto*, 130.

police.²⁰ The antirevolutionary stance of the *chorbadzhii* in general has also earned them the stigma of traitors in popular and academic histories.²¹ Yet, as recent studies have emphasized, the *chorbadzhii* were involved in the broader articulation of Bulgarian national identity in the late Ottoman Empire. Many *chorbadzhii* were deeply engaged in the establishment of Bulgarian-language schools, which often created conflicts among them and with the young teachers. Financial, curriculum, and plain power struggles over education reveal how important “Bulgarian issues” were to status of the *chorbadzhii*. They were also leaders in the struggle leading up to the foundation of a Bulgarian church independent of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul. These pursuits the *chorbadzhii* regarded as complementary, rather than antithetical, to the Ottoman project of modernization, the Tanzimat, which also offered them opportunities for economic advancement.²²

The *chorbadzhii*’s wealth stemmed from a host of economic activities, such as tax farming, money lending, ownership of agricultural land, trade, as well as textile manufacturing during the Tanzimat.²³ Other Bulgarian Christian elites that emerged thanks to the administrative, legal, and economic changes during the Tanzimat also preferred the palatable opportunities of the empire to the unknown possibilities of political independence.²⁴ These newer pro-Ottoman elites consisted of bureaucrats in the expanding Tanzimat administration that admitted non-Muslims as well as members of a nascent intelligentsia²⁵ who acquired modern secular education in Russia, Serbia, Romania, central and western Europe, or the

²⁰ Strashimirov, *Istoriia na Aprilskoto*, 284–85.

²¹ For this line of interpretation, see especially the memoirs of Zakhari Stoianov, *Zapiski po Bŭlgarskite Vŭstaniia* (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Pisatel, 1975). See also Mikhail Grŭncharov’s very useful discussion of the betrayal theme with respect to the Bulgarian notables, the *chorbadzhii*, in *Chorbadzhiŭstvo i Bŭlgarskoto Obshtestvo prez Vŭzrazhdaneto* (Sofia: Universitetsko Izdatelstvo “Sv. Kliment Okhridski,” 1999). For the most rigorous historiographical analysis on this issue, see Petrov, “Tanzimat for the Countryside,” 208–17.

²² See Grŭncharov, *Chorbadzhiŭstvo i Bŭlgarskoto Obshtestvo*, 57–88; Georgi Pletn’ov, *Chorbadzhiite i Bŭlgarskata Natsionalna Revoliutsiia* (Veliko Tŭrnovo: IK “Vital,” 1993), 13–55.

²³ See Petrov, “Tanzimat for the Countryside,” 218–19.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 208–17.

²⁵ On the formation of a nationally conscious Bulgarian intelligentsia, see Thomas A. Meininger, “The Formation of a Nationalist Bulgarian Intelligentsia” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1974).

Ottoman Empire.²⁶ Another elite circle consisted of merchants (old and young) who prospered thanks to the expansion of Ottoman markets, the development of the textile industry in the southern Balkans, and improved internal security, which facilitated travel and commerce.²⁷ In short, the Bulgarian elites in the Tanzimat Ottoman society feared radical political change of the kind that the supporters of the April Uprising championed. Their sons or promising young men, who obtained various levels of education thanks to sponsorship by the elites, advocated revolution and independence. This generation of Bulgarian revolutionaries saw the political independence of the Bulgarian nation as the realization of equality and justice. Their perception was inspired by romantic nationalism and the liberal ideas of equality and representative government. It was also influenced by Russian populism, emboldened by the Italian unification, and stirred by the Paris Commune. These men were dissatisfied with the paternalist Tanzimat conception of politics and equality, as were, in fact, the Muslim Young Ottomans since the mid-1860s. They blamed Sultan Abdülaziz I and the architects of the Tanzimat—Reshid Pasha, Fuad Pasha, and Ali Pasha—for “brewing wrong policies in an ivory tower,”²⁸ thus allowing undue Great Power influence in the empire and ultimately threatening its integrity. The Young Ottomans advocated constitutional monarchy while many of the April Uprising revolutionaries wished for a republican form of government. So perhaps the premature outbreak of the April Uprising also had to do with their eagerness, or even impatience, for change, including changing the leadership of Bulgarian Christians.

News of the revolt spread in the following three-four days. Kablesnikov sent his famous “blooded letter” to the committee in Panagiurishte urging the proclamation of an uprising in the entire revolutionary district. Upon receiving the letter, Georgi Benkovski called for a national uprising. From then on villages in the Filibe *sancak*, i.e., part of

²⁶ On how Bulgarians’ conceptions of Europe and modernity were refracted through and shaped by Greek, Russian, Serbian, Romanian, and Ottoman institutions and publications, see Diana Mishkova, “Europe in the Nineteenth-Century Balkans: A Case-Study in the Cultural Transfer of a Concept,” *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 42, no. 1/4 (2004), 183–200, and “In Quest of Balkan Occidentalism,” *Currents of History (Tokovi Istorije)* 1–2 (2006): 29–62.

²⁷ Michael Palairt, *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914: Evolution without Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41–42, 59, 66–76, 81–84.

²⁸ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000 [originally published Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962]), 11; their ideas are elaborated, esp. in pp. 10–80.

the Plovdiv revolutionary district (one of five altogether of which four were active), rose in support of the rebellion during the following week. The cities of Filibe and Tatar Pazarcık remained quiet because Ottoman army units were stationed there, coupled with an increased police presence. Tosun Beğ, who was the *kaymakam bey* (district chief) of Karlovo, gathered bands of irregular forces to block roads and passages while an artillery unit under the command of Hafız Pasha attacked the revolutionary leaders. Meanwhile, the Porte issued a general order for the mobilization of the Muslim population. The police chief of the city of Dospat, Ahmed Ağa Barutanlı, who was sent to quell the rebellion, mobilized irregular forces and encircled the village of Batak. After the arrival of regular Ottoman forces and the escape of the insurgents, much of the population that surrendered was brutally murdered.²⁹ In the contemporary European press this incident became symbolic of the dangers posed by the Ottoman Empire's lacking in civilization.

Overall, the April Uprising was fairly quickly put down without accomplishing its goal of liberating Bulgarians from Ottoman rule. By November 1876 Bulgarian émigré circles in Romania, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Serbia formed organizations in order to deal with the refugees who had taken part in the revolt as well as to spark the interest of the Great Powers in Bulgarian aspirations for independence. Émigrés who had founded the Central Bulgarian Benevolent Society in Bucharest convened a national assembly with the express purpose of formulating a political program that demanded from the Great Powers and outlined to them the framework for the restoration of Bulgarian statehood.³⁰

Meanwhile, in December 1876 Great Power representatives met in Istanbul to negotiate a peace settlement after the brief war between the Ottoman Empire and Serbia, in which the Ottomans emerged victorious. The Russian delegates pressured for the creation of a Bulgarian state for the first time, though much larger than they had promised to Austria-Hungary earlier that year. But the adamant opposition of the British yielded Russian concession to a divided Bulgaria, a proposition that was in any case unacceptable to the Porte. It also rejected the reform measures that the delegates advanced for Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria.³¹

²⁹ Mazhdrakova-Chavdarova, *Natsionalno-revoliutsionni Borbi*, 236–39; Alexander Vezenkov, “Proektüt i Skandalüt ‘Batak,’” *Anamneza* 4 (2009): 159–65.

³⁰ Mazhdrakova-Chavdarova, *Natsionalno-revoliutsionni Borbi*, 261–62, 266.

³¹ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 171–72.

This rejection occurred in the context of a momentous change that had taken place before the peace conference was organized. Sultan Abdüaziz I (1861–1876) was deposed at the end of March that year after he failed to suppress a month of agitation in Istanbul following the circulation of a pamphlet, titled *Manifesto for Muslim Patriots*, which called for a representative assembly.³² The *Manifesto* appeared while there was widespread discontent with how quickly the sultan had accepted the reforms proposed by Russia and Austria-Hungary in an effort to stop the revolts in Herzegovina and Bosnia.³³ The coup d'état was prepared and executed by high-ranking members of the bureaucracy and the military who advocated constitutional monarchy.³⁴ After three months, as Murad V—the next sultan in line—proved unfit for the pressures of the office, Abdülhamid II was made sultan on the condition that he would lead the process toward the proclamation of a constitution and the convocation of a parliament. These first steps toward constitutional monarchy were taken while the European diplomats discussed the future of the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul. The international diplomatic situation was tense while Russian, British, and French public agitation for intervention on behalf of Ottoman Christians further underscored the political impasse.³⁵

THE ROLE OF BULGARIAN NATIONALISM IN RUSSIAN EMPIRE BUILDING

The Russo-Ottoman War (1877–78) broke that impasse. It was the clamp-down of the April Uprising that triggered the war. Thus, despite its failure, the uprising became both symbolically and practically the foundational moment for the Principality of Bulgaria, which emerged as a result of the war. Eastern Rumelia was created as the Great Powers reduced the principality's territory first outlined by the victorious Russian troops.

The violence accompanying the revolt's suppression, especially by Ottoman irregular forces, as well as their widespread circulation fueled the nineteenth-century European perception of the Ottoman Empire as uncivilized, thus providing Russia with the excuse and opportunity to begin the war. Tsar Alexander II (1855–1881) declared war on Sultan Abdülhamid

³² Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 480.

³³ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 13–14.

³⁴ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 481.

³⁵ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 140–69.

II (1876–1909) in April 1877 under the pretext of saving the brutalized Bulgarian Christians from what he saw as Ottoman oppression. On the eve of the war, Alexander II sent an address to the Bulgarian people in which he invoked the role of the Russian tsars as protectors of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire.³⁶ A protocol signed in the Foreign Office by the Ottoman ambassadors of Russia, Great Britain, Germany, France, and Italy in March 1877 had committed the powers to take action should the Porte fail to implement reforms to improve the lives of Ottoman Christians. Yet Great Britain and Russia issued caveats almost immediately. Britain stipulated that Russia and the Ottoman Empire had to demobilize and maintain peace while Russia insisted that in the event that atrocities like those in the April Uprising were repeated, Russia would not stop demobilization. Prince Gorchakov chastised Lord Derby for playing up to the Ottomans and threatened that Russia would make no more concessions if the Porte sabotaged reforms and would thus be forced to take military action.³⁷ Alexander II had told his ministers that even though a war with the Ottoman Empire was not in Russia's interest at that particular time, "the defense of [Russia's] honor" demanded action.³⁸ By honor he meant that Russia had to stand up for the misgoverned Ottoman Orthodox Christians so as to defend what truly mattered: Russia's strategy of expansion and its status as a Great Power in the "age of empire."³⁹

Russian monarchs, beginning with Tsarina Catherine II (1762–1796), claimed to have acquired the privilege of protecting Ottoman Orthodox Christians thanks to the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), which ended the six-year long war between the Russian and Ottoman Empires during which the Ottomans lost their Muslim vassal Khanate of Crimea and other territories in the northern Black Sea basin. The treaty, however, did not empower Russia to speak on behalf of all Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Rather, it specifically gave Russia the right to make representations in front of the Sublime Porte on behalf of Orthodox Chris-

³⁶ Nikolai Ovsianyi, ed., *Sbornik materialov po grazhdanskomu upravleniiu i okkupatsii v Bolgarii v 1877–78–79, vyip. 1–6* (St. Petersburg: T-vo Khudozhestvennoi Pechati, 1903–7), v. 1: 3–5.

³⁷ *The War Correspondence of the "Daily News," 1877, with a Connecting Narrative Forming a Continuous History of the War between Russia and Turkey, Including the Letters of Archibald Forbes, J. A. MacGahan ... Containing a Full Description of the Taking of Kars* (London: Macmillan, 1878), 8.

³⁸ Quoted in Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 172.

³⁹ The term belongs to Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).

tians only in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (known also as the Danubian Principalities).⁴⁰ Yet in March 1775, when the two governments exchanged official ratifications, Catherine II announced in a manifesto that Russia had obtained advantages for Orthodox Christians and claimed that Russia would protect Orthodox Christianity from oppression and violence. To legitimize such claims, the Russian government issued in the same year a French translation of the treaty, which became the working version for diplomats in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Article 14 in this version was translated to indicate that Russia could build a public church in Istanbul that was of the Greek rite (i.e., Orthodox) as opposed to a Russian church of the Greek rite, which the Ottoman, Italian, and earlier Russian texts contained. So the Russian Orthodox church that could serve Russians and other foreigners in the Ottoman Empire was transformed into an Ottoman Orthodox church, thereby enabling the Russian ambassador in Istanbul to claim that he could make representations on behalf of an Ottoman Orthodox Church for use by Ottoman subjects. The church was never built but this subtle manipulation in the translation and the wide circulation of this translation provided Russian monarchs afterward with the opportunity to claim a role as the protectors of Orthodox Christians.⁴¹

During that war Russia had tried to obtain the support of Orthodox Christians in the rear of the Ottoman armies but the position of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire was not an important point at the peace negotiations.⁴² Expansion south into the Black Sea basin and the Caucasus was the true goal and gain of the war in the long haul toward the Straits and Istanbul. Russia claimed first the Khanate of Crimea by propping it up as an independent state and then annexing it in 1784.⁴³ This was yet another Ottoman territorial loss to Russia since 1739 and a significant victory for the Russian strategy of expansion into the Black Sea basin. Part of the northwestern Black Sea coastline made up the Ottoman principal-

⁴⁰ Roderic H. Davison, "'Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility': The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered," in *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774–1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 37.

⁴¹ Ibid., 37, and Roderic H. Davison, "The 'Dosografa' Church in the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca," in *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774–1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 51–60.

⁴² Davison, "'Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility,'" 37.

⁴³ John P. LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700–1917: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 89–90, 105–8.

ties of Wallachia and Moldavia, which Russia occupied twice in the first half of the nineteenth century, once during the Napoleonic Wars and again during the Greek War of Independence (1821–30). The second Russian occupation resulted in the promulgation in 1831 and 1832 of organic statutes that empowered high Orthodox Christian clerics as well as land-owners to elect for life the princes (*hospodars*) of the principalities.⁴⁴

In short, the Russian strategy of expansion into the Black Sea basin had been pursued since the last couple of decades of the seventeenth century as part of a broader southward expansion in the hopes of tapping into the rich Levant trade by establishing a naval presence in the Mediterranean and simultaneously pushing further into the Caspian Sea basin and Persia with the ultimate goal of controlling Central Asia. This expansion strategy involved Russia in wars with Iran and the Central Asian Muslim khanates during the nineteenth century. It also put Russia in competition with the British Empire, whose northern Indian domains were located dangerously close to the Russian Caspian periphery and its increasing economic incursions in Central Asia.⁴⁵ From the late eighteenth century, expansion into the Black Sea basin pursued control of the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, which entangled Russia in wars and diplomatic overtures with the Ottoman Empire. Russia looked for the support of powerful Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans and basically destabilized the region through series of confrontations with the other European powers that had interest in the Straits, especially Great Britain and France.⁴⁶

Russian involvement in the Balkans was then part of a much broader conceptualization of empire building. One of its tools included Russia's claim to be safeguarding Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans while soliciting their cooperation to obtain control of the Straits, ultimately reaching for Istanbul to make it a free port. This tactic became even more important after the Straits Convention (1841) stalled Russia and prompted Nicholas I to focus on his rivalry with Britain and France on the eastern Mediterranean, specifically the Christian holy sites. The

⁴⁴ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 426; LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, 125.

⁴⁵ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 320–21; LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, 89–104, 116–19, 127–28, 130–36; Alexander Polunov, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Autocracy, Reform, and Social Change, 1814–1914*, trans. Marshal S. Shatz, ed. Thomas C. Owen and Larissa G. Zakharova (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 164–65.

⁴⁶ LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, 104, 116–17, 119–23.

holy sites served as the pretext for the Crimean War (1853–56) while the tsar's true goal was to station Russian garrisons on the Bosphorus and acquire future-to-be Bulgaria. Russia's aggression did not pay off as a joint British-French expedition took Sevastopol on the Crimean Black Sea coast and Austria threatened to enter the war if Russia did not sue for peace.⁴⁷ The terms of the peace Treaty of Paris (1856) recognized Ottoman sovereignty, with Great Britain becoming its principle underwriter, though none of the Great Powers viewed the Ottoman Empire as its equal.⁴⁸ The Black Sea was declared neutral, thereby forbidding the Russian and Ottoman Empires to keep warships and build arsenals on its shores.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia acquired autonomy that was guaranteed not by Russia alone, but by all the Great Powers.⁵⁰ Hence the eastern and southern Black Sea coastline, the future "Bulgarian lands," became much more important to Russia's southward expansion strategy. This explains Russia's emphasis on her "kinship" with the Balkan Slavs in the aftermath of the Crimean War and the vision for a Bulgarian state.⁵¹ Russia's control over her Central Asian territories hinged on an open line of communication across the Black Sea, then overland to and across the Caspian Sea all the way to the port of Kransovodsk in Turkmenistan.⁵² The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 essentially pursued this goal, reaping the fruits of earlier efforts to cultivate Bulgarian Christians as Russia's favored protégés in the Black Sea basin.

Those early efforts to foster close ties with Ottoman Bulgarian Christians exemplified the shift from defense of Orthodox Christians to espousing Slav Orthodox Christian solidarity, even though Slavophile sensibilities had circulated among the Russian intelligentsia beforehand.⁵³ In practice the strategy entailed supporting—through education and/or service in the Russian bureaucracy and army—Slavic Christian men who fought for national independence but at the same time were also expected to remain in Russia's orbit. Nikolai Ignat'ev, Russia's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire since the mid-1860s, pursued the creation of separate

⁴⁷ Ibid., 126; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 457.

⁴⁸ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 37, 50–53.

⁴⁹ LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, 127.

⁵⁰ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 147–51.

⁵¹ LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, 137–39.

⁵² Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 157.

⁵³ On these Slavophile sentiments, see Michael Boro Petrovich, *The Emergence of Russian Pan Slavism, 1856–1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956).

Slavic states under Russian tutelage, focusing on the Bulgarian Christians in particular. He first lent support to the long-standing efforts of clerics and lay people to obtain autonomy from the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul by lobbying Sultan Abdülaziz I on their behalf. Both the patriarch and the upper echelons of the clergy were Greek-speaking, which had been a source of friction between Bulgarian- and Greek-speaking clergy since the beginning of the nineteenth century and possibly earlier.⁵⁴ And while the movement for restoring the Bulgarian autocephalous church predated Ignat'ev's efforts, his intervention was decisive and fruitful. In 1870, a special *ferman* (an imperial edict) authorized the creation of a Bulgarian Exarchate. By 1872, in spite of Ignat'ev's efforts to avert discord, the implementation of the *ferman* had resulted in a schism with the Ecumenical Patriarch and inaugurated Greco-Bulgarian conflicts that lasted into the twentieth century.⁵⁵

Having secured an autonomous Bulgarian church, Ignat'ev began advancing the creation of a Bulgarian state that would be on the way to Istanbul. On the eve of the Russo-Ottoman War Tsar Alexander II issued an address to the Bulgarians in which he explained that his predecessors had already helped Serbia and Romania to obtain autonomy and now it was the turn of the Bulgarians to be liberated.⁵⁶

THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Nonetheless, the timing of the war's outbreak was in large part determined by the journalistic and diplomatic circulation of the harsh Ottoman crack-down on the April Uprising as well as the pressure of pan-Slav circles in and outside the Russian ruling elites. During the second half of the nineteenth century Slavophile sentiments among Russian literati and bureaucrats as well as Slavophile organizations emanated from concern about the conditions of Slavs in the Ottoman and Austrian Empires and almost

⁵⁴ These are evident in the autobiography of the Bulgarian cleric Sofronii Vrachanski, *Zhitie i Stradaniia Greshnago Sofroniia*, ed. Svetla Giurova (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Pisatel, 1981).

⁵⁵ Zina Markova, *Bŭlgarskoto Tsŭrkovno-natsionalno Dvizhenie do Krimskata Voina* (Sofia: BAN, 1976), and *Bŭlgarskata Ekvarkhiia 1870–1879* (Sofia: BAN, 1989). See also David MacKenzie, *Count N. P. Ignat'ev: The Father of Lies?* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2002), 277–318.

⁵⁶ Nikolai Ovsianyi, ed., *Sbornik materialov*, v. 1: 3–5.

indignation that Western Europeans did not appreciate Slavic civilization.⁵⁷ Slavic committees in Odessa, Kiev, Moscow, and St. Petersburg provided aid to churches and schools in the Balkans as well as financial assistance to students studying in Russia. But the committees also kept close touch with the Russian consuls in Balkan cities and supported nationalist movements. The Slavophile sentiments, however, also gave expression to Russian ambivalence or opposition to Western cultural, political, and economic ideas that became prominent during the Russian era of reforms (the Great Reforms). Emphasizing Russia's distinct and even superior Slavic civilization, some of those who harbored Slavophile inclinations viewed the Balkans as a place where an independent Slavic civilization could be firmly rooted in opposition to Europe's Romano-Germanic civilization.⁵⁸ There were tensions among bureaucrats who supported intervention on behalf of the Bulgarian Christians and those who urged attention to the problems accompanying the implementation of the domestic reforms that Alexander II had begun following Russia's defeat in the Crimean War.

Ineffective economic reforms and corruption in granting and operating concessions coupled with the Europe-wide economic crisis sparked by the 1873 stock market crash crippled Russia's budding industrializing economy. Just as the Eastern Crisis was taking center stage in international politics, the Russian government faced ominous economic and social problems.⁵⁹ So, too, did the Ottoman Empire, which, in the aftermath of the crash and the ensuing crisis, could no longer raise loans from European financial institutions to continue investing in the Tanzimat.⁶⁰ To make matters worse droughts, floods, and famine in Anatolia at the turn of the decade dropped tax revenues, thereby forcing the Ottoman government to increase taxes on populations in the Balkans. The two triggers of the Eastern Crisis—the revolts in Herzegovina and Bosnia and the

⁵⁷ Petrovich, *The Emergence of Russian Pan Slavism*, 61–76.

⁵⁸ Polunov, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, 162.

⁵⁹ On the origins, content, and implementation of reforms in Russia, see W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Great Reforms: Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990).

⁶⁰ On the unequal trade, and more broadly economic, relationships between the Ottoman Empire and its European rivals, see Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Imperialism, 1820–1913: Trade, Investment, and Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Specifically on the Ottoman debt, very useful is Edhem Eldem, "Ottoman Financial Integration with Europe: Foreign Loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt," *European Review* 13, no. 3 (2005): 431–45.

April Uprising (despite the previous planning in the case of the latter)—occurred precisely in the turbulent times of this economic and social crisis.⁶¹ Thus, both the Ottoman and the Russian Empires were in the midst of severe financial troubles on the eve of the war. Finance Minister Mikhail Reutern tried hard to convince Alexander II that a war against the Ottoman Empire would only ruin “our fiscal and economic interests,” but the tsar persisted in pressuring his minister to find the money necessary for the war.⁶² Other statesmen also emphasized the huge financial cost of a potential war for which the imperial government would have to pay with yet more taxes, further loans, and the printing of money, all of which would be disastrous for the Russian economy and society in the long run.⁶³ As one Russian diplomat wrote to another at the outbreak of the war, “a crusade against drunkenness and syphilis was more necessary and profitable to Russia than the ruinous crusade against the Turks for the profit of the Bulgarians.”⁶⁴

European journalists and consuls spread the news of the cruelties perpetrated by Ottoman irregular bands (*başıbozuk*) as well as the units of the regular army and police. The American consul in Istanbul, Eugene Schuyler, prepared a report on the suppression of the April Uprising which was widely circulated by the special correspondent of the *Daily News*, Januarius A. MacGahan.⁶⁵ MacGahan saw in Filibe Austrian, Russian, Greek, and French consuls who conducted their own investigations on the suppression of the April Uprising and sent the reports to their respective governments.⁶⁶ The British Liberal MP William Gladstone published the pamphlet *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* in which he castigated the British government for upholding Ottoman sovereignty while Muslim Turks, as he wrote, oppressed Christians, ruled despotically, and

⁶¹ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 480.

⁶² Quoted in Polunov, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, 137.

⁶³ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 269–72.

⁶⁴ Alexander G. Jomini to Nikolai K. Giers, quoted in Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 272.

⁶⁵ Vezekov, “Proektūt i Skandalūt ‘Batak,’” 152–53. The letters were published as a book in September 1876. The first Bulgarian translation was done by Stefan Stambolov (participant in the April Uprising as well as future regent and Bulgarian prime minister) and published in 1880.

⁶⁶ J. A. MacGahan, *The Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria. Letters of the Special Commissioner of the “Daily News,” J. A. MacGahan, Esq., with an Introduction & Mr. Schuyler's preliminary Report* (London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co., 1876), 9, <https://archive.org/details/b22449176>.

ultimately lacked in humanity and civilization.⁶⁷ The cruel suppression of the uprising provoked an outpour of sympathy in Russian society as well as advocacy for bringing Balkan Slavs under Russian protection. Slavic committees collected money, purchased weapons, and shipped them to the Balkans. Their activities began slipping out of Tsar Alexander's control, pushing him closer to a war with the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁸ Clearly aware of the economic burden that the war might incur as well as of possible British antagonism, Alexander II's government nevertheless expected that Slavic states in the Balkans that were created thanks to Russia would be its allies. The Russians were to be disappointed on numerous occasions by their "ungrateful" allies, but this belief time and again influenced foreign policy decisions in the nineteenth century.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the Russian government relied both on its diplomats and internal Bulgarian sources to gather information about the scope of the events associated with the April Uprising. The Bulgarian folklorist and writer Naiden Gerov, who served as Russia's consul in the Ottoman city of Filibe, sent information about the unfolding of the April Uprising to the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, Nikolai P. Ignat'ev, who in turn passed it on to the government in St. Petersburg.⁷⁰ Gerov did not believe in revolution as the means to Bulgarian statehood, and so he was not well aware of and downplayed the actions of the rebels. Hence he submitted to Ignat'ev reports that characterized the April Uprising as disturbances resulting from Ottoman misgovernment while stressing that Ottoman reprisals were committed on innocent and peaceful population. Gerov further portrayed the Ottoman government as exaggerating the revolt in order to impose even tighter control on the Bulgarian people. Ignat'ev sent Prince Aleksei N. Tseretelev to investigate the situation on the ground and he also described at length the Ottoman massacres, but he did not accord much importance to the actions of the Bulgarian revolutionaries.⁷¹

⁶⁷ W. E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London: John Murray, 1876). For a discussion of the opinions British liberals held especially of Ottoman Turks in the late nineteenth century, see N. Çiçek, "The Turkish Response to Bulgarian Horrors: A Study in English Turcophobia," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 1 (2006): 87–102.

⁶⁸ Polunov, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, 167.

⁶⁹ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 266–70.

⁷⁰ V. N. Vinogradov, *Mezhdunarodnyie Otnosheniia na Balkanakh 1856–1878 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 269.

⁷¹ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 168–69.

The circulation of stories testifying to the “uncivilized” behavior of the Ottomans in putting down Christian rebels lent legitimacy to Russia’s declaration of war, both domestically and internationally. The war promised to serve not only Russia’s foreign policy interests but also, not less importantly, to demonstrate its status as a civilized state, especially vis-à-vis the other Great Powers and its erstwhile Ottoman rival, whose civilization was always in question. The “standard of civilization”⁷² which admitted a state into the family of nations was reserved for societies that had the cultural and historical experiences of Christian Europe and on that score neither Russia nor the Ottoman Empire did well.⁷³ Outsiders were then not truly sovereign and hence did not enjoy protection against external intervention in domestic affairs.⁷⁴ The suppression of the Herzegovina and Bosnia revolts and the April Uprising on the eve of the Russo-Ottoman War consolidated, especially in Great Britain, an image of the Ottoman Empire as a place where humanity was routinely violated and was thus undeserving of British guarantees of Ottoman sovereignty.⁷⁵ Indeed, Russia’s war against the Ottoman Empire on behalf of the brutalized Christian Slavs initially enjoyed approval as a humanitarian and civilizing action.⁷⁶

On 24 April 1877 Alexander II proclaimed the start of Russia’s war against the Ottoman Empire. By the end of January 1878 the Russian army had won two key battles, which enabled it to claim victory. After a couple of rebuffs by the Ottoman regiments under the command of Süleyman Pasha and Osman Pasha, the forces of General Iosif Gurko captured the city of Plevna/Pleven, having taken over the mountain pass of Shipka that connected the northern to the southern Balkans. The Russian army continued moving southeast, reached the old Ottoman capital of Edirne, and then headed for Istanbul when the Ottomans finally sued for peace.⁷⁷

⁷² Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of “Civilization” in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

⁷³ Antony Anghie, “Finding the Peripheries: Sovereignty and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century International Law,” *Harvard International Law Journal* 40 (Winter 1999): 27–28.

⁷⁴ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 50–51.

⁷⁵ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 111.

⁷⁶ Jelena Milojković-Djurić, *The Eastern Question and the Voices of Reason: Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Balkan States, 1875–1908* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2002), 45.

⁷⁷ Jelavich, *Russia’s Balkan Entanglements*, 173.



Tenniel, John, Artist. [*Tightening the Grip*]. [Dec. 1 publication date, 1877] Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009617457>. (Accessed June 03, 2016.)

A large bear hugs a Turkish man, who clasps a bloody dagger, in a tight grip. The published version was accompanied by a poem encouraging England to condemn the Ottoman massacre of the Bulgarian Christians and to support the Russians in the Russian-Ottoman War that was unfolding in the Balkans. With this caricature, Tenniel shows the bear—a symbol of the Russians—as the only power that blocks Turkish violence.

In these conditions the Ottoman and Russian governments signed an armistice that demanded the foundation of a state whose borders would be set by “the majority of the Bulgarian population, and which cannot,

under any circumstances, be less than those described by the Constantinople Conference.”⁷⁸ Russia successfully pressured the Ottoman government into accepting a large Bulgarian state that stretched north from the Danube south to the Aegean Sea and west from Serbia east to the Black Sea. These extensive boundaries were written into the Treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878). Moreover, the Russian army was to occupy the newly created polity for the next two years while Russian officials were to help with its administrative organization.⁷⁹ The sizeable Bulgarian state charted in San Stefano⁸⁰ did not stand the test of time but it did shape the imagination of both committed Bulgarian nationalists as well as the foreign, and occasionally domestic, policy decisions of Bulgarian governments through the Second World War.

THE BALKANS AFTER THE TREATY OF BERLIN

As Great Britain and Austria-Hungary became aware of the terms of the San Stefano peace treaty another international crisis ensued. Austro-Hungarian diplomats were outraged that Russia broke its pledge made in July 1876 not to create a large Bulgarian state. Britain viewed the treaty as giving undue influence to Russia in Ottoman Europe and hence as a breach of the international balance of power. British diplomats were especially concerned that the San Stefano Bulgaria, dependent as it was on Russia, with access to the Aegean and close to the Bosphorus Straits and Istanbul, would give Russia tremendous leverage over the Porte. The tension between the British and the Russian Empires was especially acute since both pursued essentially the same goal with respect to the Straits. Each wanted to have a treaty with the Ottomans, which would put them in inferior position thereby enabling Britain or Russia to enjoy free navigation while closing the Straits for rival states.⁸¹ Faced with the threat of war against another Great Power, Russian statesmen agreed to a revision of the Treaty of San Stefano. The terms of revision were first outlined in a

⁷⁸ The Istanbul conference of December 1876 called to resolve the Eastern Crisis. Quoted in Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 173.

⁷⁹ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 175.

⁸⁰ Present-day Yeşilköy in western Turkey.

⁸¹ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 175–76; Barbara Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870–1887* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 154.

secret Anglo-Russian agreement whereby Russia conceded to dividing the large Bulgarian state that had emerged as a result of Ottoman defeat while Britain accepted that Russia would keep most of the territorial gains in Asia that it acquired thanks to the war.⁸² Meanwhile, eager to demonstrate the Great Power status of recently unified Germany, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck readily offered to mediate the international crisis by hosting a European congress in Berlin. Thus, in July 1878, the Great Powers convened in the German capital to renegotiate the Ottoman–Russian peace settlement. The resulting Treaty of Berlin radically altered the terms of San Stefano.

The Treaty of Berlin angered all of the parties that were directly affected by it: the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, the Bulgarians who demanded an independent state as well as the Muslims who were forced to exchange Ottoman for nascent Bulgarian sovereignty. Sultan Abdülhamid II and his grand vizier, Küçük Said Pasha, were also anxious that the treaty heralded further partition of the empire among the Great Powers.⁸³ The sizeable Bulgarian state outlined in San Stefano was divided into three parts. A Principality of Bulgaria would be created under Ottoman suzerainty between the Danube and the Balkan mountain range, inclusive of the Sofia region and the Black Sea Port of Varna. The Russian army was to remain in occupation of the principality for nine months. Bordering the principality to the south another polity was to be created, Eastern Rumelia. Its territory was planned to stretch south of the Balkan mountain range to the Rhodope Mountains and east to the Black Sea port of Bergös/Burgas, thus sharing borders only with the principality and the empire. Eastern Rumelia would be an administratively autonomous Ottoman province headed by a Christian governor with the aid of an elected legislative assembly. The Russian army was planned to remain in occupation as well until the convocation of the first provincial assembly. The region of Macedonia, which comprised roughly three provinces (Kosovo, Selanik, and Monastir), was returned to the Ottoman Empire on the condition of reform, especially improving the plight of the Christian population.

Second, the Treaty of Berlin further limited Russian clout in the eastern Balkans by allowing Austria-Hungary to occupy and conduct reforms in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and the Sancak of Novi Pazar as well as

⁸² Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 57–58.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 61.

THE TREATIES OF SAN STEFANO AND BERLIN, 1878



-  Bulgaria as defined by the Treaty of San Stefano
-  National boundaries as defined by the Treaty of Berlin
-  Regional boundaries

to exercise influence over the Serbian government.⁸⁴ While accepting the terms of the treaty, the Russian foreign minister, D. A. Miliutin, viewed the division between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia as temporary and anticipated that the principality would serve as the core of Bulgarian national unification at some point in the future.⁸⁵

Third, Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania were accorded full independence from the Ottoman Empire and given additional territory. Thus, the Ottomans de facto lost most of their European possessions by the terms of the Treaty of Berlin.⁸⁶

The decisions made in Berlin infuriated many Bulgarian Christians and deeply frightened Turkish and non-Turkish Muslims as well as Greek Christians whose destiny was assigned to the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. Let me focus particularly on reactions regarding the territory that became Eastern Rumelia, since they foreshadowed the opportunities as well as the deep antagonisms that Muslims and Christians dealt with as they made the transition from Ottoman imperial to Bulgarian national sovereignty. Dwelling on these reactions helps us also understand some of the decisions taken in Berlin and, perhaps more importantly, the structure that Eastern Rumelia was given.

Numerous Bulgarian Christians who found out that they would be living in Eastern Rumelia sent petitions to the Berlin signatory states demanding at least unification with the Principality of Bulgaria if not complete restoration of the San Stefano borders.⁸⁷ Prominent Bulgarian Christians, some of whom had participated in the struggles for independence, such as Ivan Ev. Geshov, Dimitŭr Grekov, Todor Ikonomov, Mikhail Iv. Madzharov, and Grigor Nachovich, emphasized that all these petitions demonstrated how important it was to reverse the decisions taken in Berlin.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 176–77.

⁸⁵ An excerpt from Milutin's diary captures this sentiment. See the quote in V. N. Vinogradov, *Mezhdunarodnyie*, 407.

⁸⁶ To the consternation of its wartime ally, Romania, Russia acquired territory in southern Bessarabia, which prompted Romania to seek future alliances with Austria-Hungary and Germany rather than Russia. See Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 178.

⁸⁷ Elena Statelova, *Iztochna Rumeliia (1879/1885): iekonomika, politika, kultura* (Sofia: Otechestven Front, 1983).

⁸⁸ Ivan Ev. Geshov, "Borbata za pobŭlgariiavane na Iztochna Rumeliia i moiata pŭrva diplomaticheska misiia," in *Spomeni i Studii* (Sofia: P. Glushkov, 1928), 63–125.

In August 1878 former Bulgarian national revolutionaries set up a secret organization called *Edinstvo* (Unity) in Filibe (the future capital of Eastern Rumelia) for the purpose of mounting an armed struggle against the Treaty of Berlin. *Edinstvo* began coordinating plans with similar organizations that were formed in the Principality of Bulgaria as well. Their primary goal was the unification of the principality with the province, which, from their perspective, constituted northern and southern Bulgaria respectively. *Edinstvo* founded branches throughout Eastern Rumelia and turned to the Russian army for support. General Mikhail D. Skobelev advised *Edinstvo* to begin organizing gymnastics associations that would provide military training to the civilian population. This measure was also intended to prepare Bulgarian Christians for opposition to the setting up of Ottoman garrisons in Eastern Rumelia. By the fall Russian instructors were already providing training and the Russian army supplied the sixteen existing gymnastics associations with weapons.⁸⁹

Greek Christians were equally dissatisfied with the Treaty of Berlin and openly terrified by a future in which Russia and its protégé, the Bulgarian Christians, would hold the reins of power. Greek Christian elites opposed the existence of Eastern Rumelia altogether and made their concerns known in petitions or in person to British, French, and Austrian diplomats. Frederick Calvert, who was the British vice consul in Filibe, reported to the British ambassador, Sir Henry Layard, in March 1878 that Greek Christians complained to him about abuses committed by the Russian occupation authorities in the city.⁹⁰ Prominent Greek Christians also conveyed their grievances against the Russian persecution of the Greeks to the French and the Austrian consuls. These grievances betrayed the deep fear that the Bulgarians would force the Greeks to abandon their language, destroy their schools, and compel them to attend only Bulgarian churches, warning that eventually “a revolution would break out and we will be exterminated by the Slavs.”⁹¹

These sentiments should not be dismissed as mere prejudice or as crafty appeal to European Russophobia. They reflect the intense and occasionally violent struggles that occurred between the Bulgarian and Greek

⁸⁹ Statelova, *Iztochna Rumeliia*, 21–22.

⁹⁰ Sinan Kuneralp, ed., *The Queen's Ambassador to the Sultan: Memoirs of Sir Henry A. Layard's Constantinople Embassy, 1877–1880* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009), 334. Calvert and the other British consuls sent their reports to the British ambassador in Istanbul.

⁹¹ Kuneralp, ed., *The Queen's Ambassador*, 335.

communities decades before the war about thorny questions, such as clerical appointments and promotions, the language of liturgy, finances, local power struggles for influence in the Tanzimat society, and communications between the clergy and the lay people.⁹² These questions were in turn implicated with the spread of Greek and Bulgarian nationalisms in the Ottoman Balkans roughly from the mid-nineteenth century onward. The brewing Greek–Bulgarian antagonisms culminated less than a decade before the war with the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate. It became a unifying force for the rising Bulgarian nationalism but also a bone of contention between Greek and Bulgarian Orthodox Christians because the edict that founded the Bulgarian Exarchate allowed any diocese in the Ottoman Empire to join the Exarchate if two-thirds of both the ecclesiastical and lay population so desired.⁹³ This was a severe blow to the authority of the Greek-speaking Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople to whom all Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire had been subordinated.⁹⁴ From that point until the end of the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman Macedonia in particular became a site of violent and bloody conflicts between the Exarchate and the Patriarchate as well as among armed bands associated with both or with Bulgaria or Greece. All fought over the loyalties of the Orthodox Christians, advancing autonomy or independence for Macedonia or, in the case of Bulgaria and Greece, advancing territorial claims, all the while terrorizing Orthodox Christians as well as Muslims.⁹⁵

⁹² See Markova, *Bŭlgarskoto Tsŭrkovno-natsionalno Dvizhenie do Krimskata Voina*, and Denis Vovchenko, “A Triumph of Orthodoxy in the Age of Nationalism: The Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Sublime Porte, Russia, and Greece (1856–1890),” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 28/29 (2012/2013): 255–66.

⁹³ Markova, *Bŭlgarskata Ekzarkhiia*, 30, 77.

⁹⁴ The Ecumenical Patriarch was a Greek speaker, and though chosen by the Holy Synod, was invested with his powers by the Ottoman sultan and held accountable for the loyalty of the Orthodox Christian population. The autocephalous Orthodox Christian churches of the medieval Balkan kingdoms gradually became subordinated to and dominated by the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Greek-speaking ecclesiastical elite. Upward clerical mobility in fact depended on learning Greek and integrating oneself into the Grecophone clergy. Generally, upward social mobility for non-Grecophone Orthodox Christians in the Balkans involved becoming a Greek speaker and seeking integration into the Greek merchant networks that flourished from the eighteenth century onward.

⁹⁵ See especially Duncan M. Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movement, 1893–1903* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), and İpek Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

Muslims' reactions to the postwar peace settlements were marked by a combination of desperation, fear, and resilience. During the Russo-Ottoman War Muslims fled massively to different parts of the Ottoman Balkans or to Istanbul and even further east or were killed. Those who stayed behind resisted the San Stefano treaty and many actively opposed the Treaty of Berlin as well. The Muslims of Thrace formed a provisional government that sent in May 1878 a memorandum to the signatories of the Treaty of Paris (1856) explaining that the Treaty of San Stefano was not valid because it had not been ratified by the Paris Treaty signatories. The memorandum further pointed out that the residents of the region could not accept Bulgarian sovereignty, because they were Muslim and Turkish and had suffered from both Bulgarian and Russian cruelties.⁹⁶

Clashes between Muslim and Bulgarian Christian villages were very common in the months between the San Stefano and the Berlin peace treaties. Turkish Muslims and Pomaks of the Rhodope mountain region coalesced into a resistance movement that refused to recognize the emerging postwar order. This resistance turned into insurgency as the Ottoman government was in no position to respond to the Muslims' appeal for help. A joint Russo-Ottoman commission attempted to pacify the rebellious Rhodope region during the month of May 1878, but the leaders of the resistance insisted that they were free to disregard orders demanding obedience, since the Ottoman government was powerless and thus could not protect their lives, homes, and property.⁹⁷

The Treaty of Berlin, signed as it was by all the Great Powers on 11 July 1878, did not offer better alternatives to the Muslims of Eastern Rumelia. During the negotiations yet another commission was formed, this time specifically to hear the grievances of Muslim refugees who had gathered in the Rhodope region that by the terms of the treaty was divided between the Ottoman Empire proper and the administratively autonomous Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia.⁹⁸ To address this problem, European ambassadors met at the British embassy in Istanbul between 15 and

⁹⁶ Mehmet Hacısalihoglu, "Muslim and Orthodox Resistance against the Berlin Peace Treaty in the Balkans," in *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz with Peter Sluglett (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 135–37.

⁹⁷ Hacısalihoglu, "Muslim and Orthodox Resistance," 137. Ömer Turan, "The Rhodope Resistance and Commission of 1878," in *War and Diplomacy*, 517.

⁹⁸ Hacısalihoglu, "Muslim and Orthodox Resistance," 138.

17 July 1878 to select members for an investigative commission from among European diplomats in the empire as well as the Porte. This commission traveled through the region for a month, meeting with refugees and the leaders of the resistance as well as with Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, who was the head of the civilian branch of the Russian occupation authorities. The commission drafted a report at their mid-August meeting in Istanbul, discussed it, and modified it upon protestations by the Russian delegate, who objected to the report's conclusion that Russian conduct was to blame for the refugee crisis. The final report also described Bulgarian and Russian atrocities committed against Muslims and proposed the creation of an international commission to deal with safe repatriation.⁹⁹ The report did not have much of an impact; no such commission was created. The district of Robçoz, which was the center of the resistance, remained in Eastern Rumelia. The resistance continued until late fall 1878 under the leadership of the notable Ahmed Ağa of Tımraş, Kara Yusuf, Hacı İsmail, Ali Pasha, Hacı Emin, Hüseyin Çavuş, Molla Murad, Şaban Ağa, and the former British consul at Bergos and Varna (Mr. Sinclair/Hidayet Pasha), as well as members of the defeated Ottoman army. These forces were also joined by inhabitants of Muslim towns and villages as well as military irregulars, who tried to prevent the institution of the new political regime from their hiding locations in the Rhodope Mountains.¹⁰⁰

Todor Ikonomov, the future prefect of the İslimiye/Sliven prefecture of Eastern Rumelia, traveled in the Bergos region during the summer of 1878 to negotiate with Muslim strongmen to achieve peace and loyalty to the new province. He managed to win the trust of some Turkish Muslim villages.¹⁰¹ However, in general, Muslims were reluctant to return to their homes and accept the new political realities while the Russian occupation authorities remained in place, even though they were there to guarantee what they saw as just rule and an orderly transition to self-government.

⁹⁹ Turan, "The Rhodope Resistance and Commission of 1878," 521–28.

¹⁰⁰ Ömer Turan, *Rodop Türklerinin 1878 Direnişi* (Ankara: Balkan Türkleri Göçmen ve Mülteci Dernekleri Federasyonu, 1998); Turan, "The Rhodope Resistance and Commission of 1878," 519; Bernard Lory, "Ahmed Ağa Tămraşlijata: The Last Derebey of the Rhodopes," in *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 179–203.

¹⁰¹ Todor Ikonomov, *Memoari*, ed. Toncho Zhechev (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Pisatel, 1973), 177, 225–31.

A CIVILIZING MISSION IN THE BALKANS: CREATING EASTERN RUMELIA

Creating an Organic Statute and administrative structure for Eastern Rumelia in these circumstances was challenging, as the European Commission (EC) delegates charged with this task realized when they set foot in Filibe on 16 October 1878. They were met by protesting Bulgarian Christians who flooded the delegates with petitions censuring the uncaring attitude of Europe, rejecting Ottoman sovereignty, and pleading with Russia to change the course of events. During March and early April 1879 two leading Bulgarian Christians, Ivan Ev. Geshov and Dr. G. Iankulov, visited Paris, London, Rome, Vienna, and Berlin to object to Britain's proposals for the stationing of Ottoman garrisons in Eastern Rumelia. They demanded that the future governor not be a Turkish Muslim Ottoman bureaucrat. On 14 April 1879 the members of the EC finally signed on to the Organic Statute. The EC remained in Filibe until the provincial legislative assembly convened in the fall in order to act as an advisory body to Eastern Rumelia's governor in the process of implementing the Statute. Despite their antagonism toward the EC, Bulgarian Christians were pleased with two of its key decisions. First, after many tense exchanges between Russian and British diplomats, the EC agreed that no Ottoman garrisons could be stationed in Eastern Rumelia. Second, the Russian occupation authorities and diplomats undercut British and Ottoman efforts to appoint the *mutasarrıf* of the *sancak*, Cebel-i Lübnan Rüstem Pasha, as Eastern Rumelia's governor. Instead, Alexander (Aleko) Bogoridi received his appointment from the sultan as Eastern Rumelia's governor on the day that the EC signed off on the Organic Statute. The nomination of Bogoridi was acceptable to all parties. He was of Bulgarian Christian origin (married into prominent Ottoman Greek circles) and a long-term Ottoman official.¹⁰²

The structure of Eastern Rumelia revealed a couple of features key to late-nineteenth-century geopolitical rivalries. First, the balance among the Great Powers became entwined with the balance among specific ethno-religious groups (especially Bulgarian Christians, Turkish Muslims, and Greek Christians), which viewed outside powers as potential protectors.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Statelova, *Iztochna Rumeliia*, 22, 38, 44, 45, 48, 51.

¹⁰³ The similarities with Ottoman Lebanon are clear.

Second, geopolitical interests were formulated in the familiar nineteenth-century language of “civilizing backward peoples” by showing the way to rational and just governance. But this language was also entwined with struggles in the imperial metropolises between liberal and conservative political visions over the question of the moral responsibility of empire.¹⁰⁴ When William Gladstone penned the *Bulgarian Horrors* following the suppression of the April Uprising, he forced the question whether Britain was prepared to uphold just and rational government.¹⁰⁵ In Russia, pan-Slavic sentiments complemented by domestic reformist discourse of just and rational authority invoked similar concerns about Russia’s role in promoting better life for Slavic populations under Ottoman rule.¹⁰⁶ They viewed the suppression of the April Uprising as an indication that the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire had been inadequate to promote justice and equality among Muslims and non-Muslims, thereby calling for the limitation of Ottoman sovereignty.

Eastern Rumelia was thus born in this context of imperial rivalries and broader European considerations of governance, especially regarding European colonies in Asia and Africa. In the second half of the nineteenth century British colonial officials and legal scholars viewed British possessions in the Indian subcontinent and in South Africa as “quasi-sovereign,” that is to say, “states that were said to retain some measure of authority over their internal legal affairs while holding only limited capacity to form international relations.”¹⁰⁷ Eastern Rumelia could be regarded as a “quasi-sovereign” state, since the sultan remained the suzerain; the province paid an annual tribute, had only a gendarmerie, and could not conduct foreign policy. Yet such a category would not fully describe its relationship with the Ottoman Empire since the European powers did not con-

¹⁰⁴ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 147–54.

¹⁰⁵ William E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London: J. Murray, 1876). Few years later, in 1882, Gladstone authorized the British invasion of Egypt as an act to stop militant Islam. Thirty-seven percent of his personal investment portfolio was in Egyptian stock. See A. G. Hopkins, “Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History,” *Past and Present* 164, no. 1 (1999): 198–243.

¹⁰⁶ See Petrtovich, *The Emergence of Russian Pan Slavism*, 67–72, 242–54.

¹⁰⁷ Lauren Benton, “From International Law to Imperial Constitutions: The Problem of Quasi-Sovereignty, 1870–1900,” *Law and History Review* 26 (2008): 595–619, here esp. 596.

sider the empire to be a civilized modern state, which made it, in their eyes, incapable of governing justly Christians as well as Muslims. They used the tools of international diplomacy and occasionally troops to intervene on behalf of what they considered oppressed Ottoman Christians,¹⁰⁸ the recent Russo-Ottoman War being the latest example.

The Berlin signatory powers, especially Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, quarreled over the nature of Ottoman imperial authority in newly founded Eastern Rumelia, which raised broader questions about the kind of rule appropriate for those claiming self-rule (but ostensibly lacking in political maturity) from the shrinking Ottoman world. Lord Salisbury noted that Eastern Rumelians should enjoy order, justice, and safety of life and property, but not the liberty of political and social agitation which might undermine the government.¹⁰⁹ Lord Beaconsfield remarked to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff that the institutions Wolff envisioned for Eastern Rumelia “might be too liberal for the peculiar circumstances of the case.”¹¹⁰ Considering what kind of limited self-rule was appropriate involved Britain, Russia, and Austria-Hungary in a debate about how to deal with nationalist aspirations. This was a serious question for all. In Austria-Hungary, as the political liberalization since the 1850s expanded enfranchisement, political parties and clubs increasingly mobilized the population along national lines.¹¹¹ To legitimize national aspirations in Eastern Rumelia held the danger of imperial collapse in the equally diverse Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Austria-Hungary was given to administer by the terms of the Treaty of Berlin. Likewise, Britain’s rule over India was threatened by opposition to colonialism articulated in the language of nationalism.¹¹² For the tsarist government to support Bulgarian nationalism (so long as it served Russia) at the expense of Turkish Muslims quite likely alleviated domestic anxieties about Russia’s own Muslim populations in the recently “pacified” Caucasus as

¹⁰⁸ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 63–141.

¹⁰⁹ Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, *Rambling Recollections* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1908), vol. 2, 234.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 237.

¹¹¹ Pieter Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

¹¹² Partha Chattarjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

well as in Central Asia, where a Muslim reform movement was gaining strength.¹¹³

The Russian diplomats advocated an Organic Statute for Eastern Rumelia which would include some form of popular sovereignty, thereby transferring as much Ottoman authority as possible into the hands of Bulgarian Christians. Thus, the Russian member of the EC, Tseretelev, advocated for an elected legislative assembly. He, as well as the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, aimed at setting up Eastern Rumelian institutions in ways that would make them comparable to those of the Principality of Bulgaria so that the unity of the Bulgarian nation would be sustained, even though Russia was not committed to making political unity happen.¹¹⁴ Russia was not willing to spare energy on this project of doubtful profit especially when St. Petersburg was preoccupied with its empire in the Caucasus and Central Asia.¹¹⁵ The Russian foreign minister pointed out that the temporary Russian authorities had to lay the framework for the province as early as possible in order to limit the decisions of the EC and obviate the transfer of the administration to Muslim Turks.¹¹⁶

Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, the British representative to the EC, argued that while the Eastern Rumelian population should be autonomous, i.e., availed of the “constitutional freedoms that other European nations enjoy,” Ottoman suzerainty must be ensured.¹¹⁷ Guaranteeing such freedoms, Wolff argued, would ensure the security of the population and alleviate the fears of Christians, thereby forestalling efforts at unification with the Principality of Bulgaria.¹¹⁸ He maintained that the separation had to be maintained for some time as a guarantee for peace, however, the broader outlook of British foreign policy did not really rule out the

¹¹³ On the Caucasus, see Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002); on Central Asia, see Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), and Daniel R. Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹¹⁴ Maria G. Manolova, *Rusiia i Konstitutsionnoto Ustroistvo na Iztochna Rumeliia* (Sofia: BAN, 1976), 35–47, 40–41, 112–13.

¹¹⁵ On Russian empire building, see LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, passim.

¹¹⁶ Manolova, *Rusiia i Konstitutsionnoto*, 44.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Manolova, *Rusiia i Konstitutsionnoto*, 37–38.

¹¹⁸ Manolova, *Rusiia i Konstitutsionnoto*, 38.

unification of the two polities at some point in the future.¹¹⁹ Wolff was also concerned about the actual political power of Muslim Turks and Greek Christians in Eastern Rumelia, while Bulgarian Christians were numerically stronger and enjoyed the backing of Russia. The population census conducted in Eastern Rumelia in 1880 set the number of inhabitants at 815,946, of whom 573,560 were marked as Bulgarian, 174,700 as Turks, 42,654 as Greeks, 19,549 as Roma, 4,177 as Jews, and 1,306 as Armenians.¹²⁰ Bulgarians' numerical superiority reflected by the census was also the result of the massive Muslim emigration that occurred due to the war.

Meanwhile, Count Andrassy, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, instructed his EC representative, Benjamin von Kallay, to curb Russian ambitions in the Ottoman Balkans by insisting on the creation of a province under actual Ottoman authority. This meant establishing institutions that closely resembled Ottoman ones. The ultimate goal of this position would be the eventual reincorporation of Eastern Rumelia into the Ottoman Empire.¹²¹ Kallay was also reluctant to support the establishment of a broadly elected legislative assembly lest Bulgarian Christians dominate politics at the expense of Muslim Turks and Greek Christians. Having just acquired the right to administer Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Austro-Hungarian diplomats were wary of setting a precedent for encouraging liberal ideas of popular sovereignty lest their administration of the province become weakened by Serb and Croat national mobilization.¹²²

Both Austro-Hungarian and British diplomats pinned the international balance among the Great Powers to a power-sharing scheme among Bulgarian Christians, Turkish Muslims, and Greek Christians. Both insisted on the appointment of administrative officials from each group and the use of Bulgarian, Turkish, and Greek as the official languages.¹²³

¹¹⁹ W. N. Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement, 1878–1880*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Frank Cass & Co., 1963), 208, 210–11.

¹²⁰ Statelova, *Iztochna Rumeliia*, 14.

¹²¹ Manolova, *Rusiia i Konstitutsionnomo*, 37.

¹²² See Mark Pinson, "The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austro-Hungarian Rule, 1878–1918," in *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, ed. Mark Pinson with forward by Ray P. Mottahedeh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 84–129; Robert J. Donja and John V.A. Fine, Jr., *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed* (New York: Columbia University Press), 97–101.

¹²³ Manolova, *Rusiia i Konstitutsionnomo*, 39.

Yet, all were in agreement that the governor of the province should be Christian and had paid little attention to Ottoman protests in Berlin that if religious equality were to be implemented in Eastern Rumelia, then it would be unfair to exclude Muslims as candidates from the governorship position. The Ottomans viewed Eastern Rumelia as a privileged Ottoman province rather than a self-administering polity.¹²⁴ They also viewed European concerns with balance among ethno-religious groups in Eastern Rumelia as blatantly self-serving. Alexander Karathédory Pasha, one of the Ottoman delegates to Berlin, noted with irony that:

What was happening with Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia at the Congress of Berlin clearly indicated that ethnic and religious conventions had to be completely subordinate to European interests. The moment we took away from the authority of the sultan such a great number of Christians, no one found logical the argument that it was impossible and inadmissible to place Muslim populations under a Christian government. In order to avoid this trap, the Ottoman plenipotentiaries in principle used arguments arising from the rights of men, the rule of law, and equality, which were well founded and could not be challenged by the congress itself.¹²⁵

Russian colonel Shepelev argued that the colonial model of self-rule would not fit the culture and historical experiences of the Bulgarian Christians. Local needs had to be addressed, the Russians insisted, suggesting that the temporary Russian administrators had already developed the framework of governance for Eastern Rumelia.¹²⁶ The Russians opposed the suggestion by the Austro-Hungarian representative, Benjamin Kallay, for a bicameral assembly which would in practice represent the interests of Turkish Muslim landowners and Greek Christian merchants. Wolff and Baron de Ring (the French delegate to the European Commission) argued that the prewar positions of these two populations had to be restored so as to act as a balancing element to the possible extreme tendencies in a popularly elected legislative assembly. Ring emphasized that the economic achievements and intellectual potential of Greek Christians would aid the

¹²⁴ Karathédory Pacha, Premier Plénipotentiaire Ottoman, *Rapport Secret sur le Congrès de Berlin Adressé à la S. Porte*, ed. Bertrand Bareilles (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1919), 107, 109.

¹²⁵ Karathédory Pacha, *Rapport Secret*, 147.

¹²⁶ Manolova, *Rusiia i Konstitutsionnomo*, 89, 91.

development of Eastern Rumelia. To the chagrin of Bulgarian elites in the Ottoman Empire as well as to Bulgarian statesmen later, the Greeks—inside and outside the Ottoman Empire—considered the Bulgarians culturally inferior and lacking in sufficient national sentiment to qualify for statehood.¹²⁷ Eventually, Tseretelev and Kallay struck a compromise: Tseretelev consented to a Permanent Committee that would have legislative powers when the assembly was not in session while insisting that the committee could not be appointed by the governor but instead elected by the assembly.¹²⁸

The British position entailed support for institutions associated with representative government as long as a Bulgarian majority would not dominate Turkish Muslim and Greek Christian minorities.¹²⁹ This logic (along with the attempt to co-opt the Orthodox ecclesiastical elite) was also applied to newly occupied Cyprus, where the British considered their role to be one of preserving “the balance between Turk and Greek” as key to successful British rule.¹³⁰ Balance, in the context of Eastern Rumelia, meant that Russia’s clout in the Balkans (through her championship of the Bulgarian Christians) would be restrained by mechanisms of representation that assured Turkish Muslims and Greek Christians of the right to take part in the political process. In addition, Bulgarian, Turkish, and Greek had all to become official languages while the leaders of all religious communities had to be represented in the provincial assembly.

Such pluralistic schemes of government were not new to the Ottoman domains in the nineteenth century. The Great Powers had pushed after the Greek War of Independence (1821–30) for similar arrangements of shared Christian–Muslim governance, promulgation of Organic Statutes, religiously mixed administrative councils, and greater local autonomy in Ottoman areas inhabited overwhelmingly by Greek Christians.¹³¹ Prior to Eastern Rumelia, this approach was employed after the 1860 bloody Muslim–Christian–Druze conflicts in Mount Lebanon and the massacres of Christians in Damascus. Restoring order involved the Great Powers and the Ottoman government in drawn-out negotiations that culminated

¹²⁷ Mishkova, “Europe in the Nineteenth-Century Balkans,” 186–87.

¹²⁸ Manolova, *Rusiia i Konstitutsionnoto*, 114, 116–21, 124–34.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 116–21; Statelova, *Iztochna Rumeliia*, 13–51.

¹³⁰ Lord Salisbury’s remark, quoted in Andrekos Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus, 1878–1915: The Inconsequential Possession* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 159.

¹³¹ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, esp. chapters 5 and 9.

in establishing Mount Lebanon as a province led by a nonlocal Christian governor directly answerable to the Sublime Porte. He was assisted by a twelve-member administrative council representing the six major ethno-religious groups or sects; members were selected by village *shaykhs*.¹³² That peace and just government were rooted in the distribution of power among rigidly defined sects became a feature of Tanzimat Ottoman governance. This was so because Istanbul tried to reassert sovereignty in contested areas while perforce incorporating Great Power demands for safeguarding Christians. Hence the restoration of order fostered sectarianism, as Makdisi argues.¹³³

THE PROVISIONAL RUSSIAN ADMINISTRATION

While championing Bulgarian Christian interests at the expense of Greek Christians and Turkish Muslims, the members of the civilian branch of the Russian occupation authorities, the Provisional Russian Administration (PRA), viewed their mission as that of enlightened reformers. They were thus acutely sensitive to projecting an image of experts at good government. Much like the Ottoman Empire, Russia was a state undergoing profound transformations during the nineteenth century. Both the Ottoman Tanzimat and the Russian Great Reforms were intended to reassert imperial authority over huge territories and recommit the loyalties of diverse populations, including the peasants who bore the brunt of their respective empires' tax revenues.¹³⁴ Until his death in March 1878, the PRA's leader, Prince Vladimir Cherkaskii, had experience in conducting reforms in the interest of the Russian imperial government in Russia's borderlands. In Eastern Rumelia, Cherkaskii and his successor, Prince (and army general) Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov, employed reform thinking and techniques to ensure a polity in which their allies, the Bulgarian

¹³² Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 216–17.

¹³³ See Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

¹³⁴ On reforms and their implementation in Russia, see W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Great Reforms: Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990), esp. 159–91; see also Ben Eklof, John Bushnell, and Larissa Zakharova, eds., *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855–1881* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

Christians, would acquire a dominant position. Land issues stood at the core of this goal by intention but also by force of the war circumstances. The war had caused massive Muslim flight from the Russian army and the Russian-occupied territories. Christians fled from battle zones as well and some chose to resettle in the newly created Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. Hence, repatriation and settlement of these primarily rural and agriculturally productive populations involved managing Eastern Rumelia's land resources.

Russian knowledge of Ottoman land tenure arrived via French, Italian, and English translations and commentaries. Russian diplomats learned about Ottoman land laws thanks to the Ottoman diplomat Aris-tarchi Bey, who compiled, translated, and published seven volumes of Ottoman laws between 1873 and 1878. The volumes were especially intended for foreign embassies and consulates.¹³⁵ The Russian civilian authorities made use of the publications when they took over Batumi and Kars from the Ottoman Empire after the 1877–78 war. They set up special commissions to gather information on land tenure in the newly conquered provinces and to verify documents testifying to ownership of land.¹³⁶ But before this important project of colonization took off, the Russians had an opportunity to test their knowledge of Ottoman land laws and practices during their occupation of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.

Governance through land tenure reform was not new to Prince Vladimir Cherkaskii, who had drafted the Emancipation Act (1861) that freed the Russian serfs. He had also worked with the head of the Polish kingdom's civil administration, Nikolai A. Miliutin, in Russia's northwestern borderland to implement agrarian reform. Miliutin's and Cherkaskii's policies aimed at undercutting the power of local Polish landlords in the aftermath of the 1863–64 Polish rebellion.¹³⁷ Cherkaskii brought reform to bear on his tenure as the head of the civil branch of the Russian occupation authorities in Bulgaria. His experience in Poland served him as the

¹³⁵ Ekaterina Pravilova, "The Property of Empire: Islamic Law and Russian Agrarian Policy in Transcaucasia and Turkestan," *Kritika* 12, no. 2 (2011): 353–86, here 365.

¹³⁶ Pravilova, "The Property of Empire," 368.

¹³⁷ On his experience in domestic reform, see Lincoln, *The Great Reforms*, 79–90, 141. See also Mikhail Dolbilov, "Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire's Northwestern Region in the 1860s," *Kritika* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 245–71.

blueprint for his tenure in Bulgaria.¹³⁸ Upon appointing him as the head of the Russian civil occupation authorities, Tsar Alexander II explained that he expected Cherkaskii to do in Bulgaria what he had accomplished in Poland.¹³⁹

In the period after the April Uprising but before the outbreak of hostilities, Cherkaskii studied Ottoman history, law, and economy and gathered information on local conditions from educated Bulgarian Christians (many of whom later became important politicians and public figures in the Principality of Bulgaria and in Eastern Rumelia).¹⁴⁰ He continued gathering information during the first months of the war when Russian military successes were not certain. Russian efforts to acquaint the army and politicians with Bulgarian Christians resulted in the publication of *Materialy dlia izucheniia Bolgarii* (Sources for the study of Bulgaria),¹⁴¹ which served as a blueprint to the temporary Russian administration following Cherkaskii's death.¹⁴² The administration proceeded with further accumulation and creation of local knowledge by conducting a land survey from May through June 1878. This survey noted patterns of land distribution, but especially focused on large landholdings (*çiftliks*),¹⁴³ their regional distribution in the Russian-occupied territories, and the distribution among religious groups. The Russian land survey pointed out that

¹³⁸ I am indebted to Peter Holquist for sharing this argument with me. See also Goran Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko Upravljenje v Bŭlgariia prez 1877–1879* (Sofia: BKP, 1958), 66.

¹³⁹ Peter Holquist, "The Russian Empire as a 'Civilized State': International Law as Principle and Practice in Imperial Russia, 1874–1878," National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), 14 July 2004, 19, http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2004_818-06g_Holquist.pdf. I thank the author for providing me the link to this publication.

¹⁴⁰ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 65–71.

¹⁴¹ *Materialy dlia izucheniia Bolgarii. Napechatany po povelieniiu ego Imperatorskago Vysochestva Glavnokomanduiushchago Dieistvuiushcheiu armieiu (chast II, vypusk IV)* (Bucharest: "Stara Planina," 1877).

¹⁴² Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 65–71. This practice of knowledge production was not new; the reform impetus in Russia prompted the dispatching of literati to the Russian provinces to gather information about local peasant life and thereby develop strategies for its modernization; on this, see Catherine B. Clay, "Russian Ethnographers in the Service of Empire, 1856–1862," *Slavic Review* 54 (1995): 45–61.

¹⁴³ Çiftlik means farm, though by the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Balkans, the term was increasingly used to denote farms made up of large landholdings. On this, see Strashimir Dimitrov, "Chiflishkoto Stopanstvo prez 50–70 godini na XIX vek," *Istoricheski Pregled* 11 (1955): 3–35.

the majority of çiftlik owners were Muslim landlords even though the majority of the population was Christian. More often than not the population figures compiled by the Russians showed Bulgarian Christians outnumbering all Muslims. There is no detailed explanation of how the demographic figures were calculated other than a brief statement that the official Ottoman records for the provinces of Tuna and Edirne were supplemented with church records.¹⁴⁴

Rectifying the discrepancy exposed by the land survey was important for Cherkaskii and the PRA because it underscored Russia's status as a civilized power capable of promoting justice and peace. Cherkaskii had been sympathetic to Russian Slavophiles in the 1840s as well as to the pan-Slavs. He came to view the Balkan Slavs as suffering the dual oppression of the incompetent Turks as well as the malignant indifference of selfish Europe.¹⁴⁵

At least on paper, Cherkaskii remarked, many Ottoman laws, particularly those on provincial government, were sound because they had been copied from Europe. But the problem remained; the Ottoman administration did not know the laws well and hence did not apply them. Instead, they "governed the country arbitrarily."¹⁴⁶ Consequently, the Russian authorities had to end "the arbitrariness of the Turkish administration, while retaining those institutions and laws which do not contradict the idea of just and humane rule over the population."¹⁴⁷ In the language of Russian reformers, arbitrariness (*proizvol'*) had to be replaced by rational legal authority (*zakonnost'*). The meanings of these concepts as well as the methods to achieve them were contested in Russia itself during the 1870s.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Cherkaskii's mind was clear with respect to achieving justice on behalf of the Bulgarians: replacing the local Ottoman administrative authorities with temporary Russian ones so that the arbitrariness of Ottoman rule would end (while privileging the Christian population).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Cherkaskii quoted in Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 69. See *Materialy dlia izucheniia Bolgarii*, 94; the subsequent pages contain population tables by province and district.

¹⁴⁵ Petrovich, *The Emergence of Russian Pan Slavism*, 37–38, 241–46.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 68. Cherkaskii approved of the administrative councils that had been established after the 1864 and 1867 provincial reforms in the Ottoman Empire; the councils were made up of both Muslims and non-Muslims; on this point, see Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 81.

¹⁴⁷ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 81.

¹⁴⁸ Lincoln, *The Great Reforms*, 162–73.

¹⁴⁹ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 68.

Yet Cherkaskii harbored few illusions about the Bulgarian Christians, whose questionable civility (from his perspective) could risk Russia's image as a civilized power. He had been worried even before the end of the war about the actual power of the Russian civilian authorities at a time of explosive tensions between Turkish Muslims and Bulgarian Christians.¹⁵⁰ Having witnessed the violence between them in the course of the war, he wrote to Colonel Zolotarev in July 1877 that the Russian army could act "as the only objective party" in the conflicts between these two populations.¹⁵¹ Cherkaskii was even more apprehensive of having to deal with the repatriation of Muslim refugees in Russian-occupied territories due to the insecure lines of communication in the army. He was deeply relieved that few Turkish Muslims were attempting to return to their homes at that early stage.¹⁵² But in any case, the civilian branch of the Russian army was concerned that as the army advanced into Ottoman territory, there seemed to be little agreement on procedures to deal with Ottoman captives as well as with fleeing Turkish Muslim families.¹⁵³ The civilian branch also realized that Russia's image in "the West" as a civilizing power was at stake.¹⁵⁴ Aware of the numerous attacks on Turkish Muslim villages as well as property seizures, the Russians also worried about having control over conditions on the ground. Hoping for an Ottoman defeat, Dmitrii Milutin had emphasized that the destruction of these villages would be detrimental to the Russians in the future.¹⁵⁵

Even though most Muslims waited for the Russians to depart before returning to their homes, the settling of Muslim and Christian refugees took up much of the energies of the civilian branch of the Russian occupation authorities. The PRA stayed until October 1879, that is, until the first Provincial Assembly of Eastern Rumelia met in the capital of Filibe. The PRA's leaders, Prince Vladimir Cherkaskii and Prince Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov, aimed to monitor who and how many Turkish Muslim refugees returned to the newly created province. They had a couple of

¹⁵⁰ Letter to Zolotarev in D. G. Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii i Grazhdanskoe Upravlenie v Bolgarii 1877–1878 gg. (gl. IX)," *Russkaia Starina* 26 (October 1895): 27.

¹⁵¹ The letter is reproduced in Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii... (gl. IX)," 27.

¹⁵² Letter to Zolotarev Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii... (gl. IX)," 28.

¹⁵³ D. Miliutin to Cherkaskii in reply to Zolotarev's letter, Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii... (gl. IX)," 28–29.

¹⁵⁴ D. Miliutin to Cherkaskii in reply to Zolotarev's letter, Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii... (gl. IX)," 29.

¹⁵⁵ Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii... (gl. IX)," 30.

goals in mind. First, the PRA hoped to provide Bulgarian Christians with demographic advantages that could be translated in politics and ultimately undermine Ottoman presence in the Balkans. Cherkaskii, Dondukov-Korsakov, Count Nikolai P. Ignat'ev, and Tsar Alexander II saw Russian victory and a Bulgarian state as the extension of Russian influence in Europe through dependable Christian Slavic states.¹⁵⁶ Second, the PRA worked to weaken Ottoman power in Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria by targeting the Muslim landed elites. To this end, the PRA developed stricter procedures for Muslim repatriation and redistributed the land of those it viewed as despotic Turkish feudal lords to impoverished Bulgarian Christian peasants.

Meanwhile, the Russian occupation authorities were sensitive to presenting an image of just liberators displaying their abidance by the evolving standards of international law regarding occupation.¹⁵⁷ In the early stages of the war, the temporary Russian authorities distributed food, allowed Christians to cultivate lands deserted by fleeing Muslims, and even settled Christians who had run away from the Ottoman army in villages abandoned by Muslims.¹⁵⁸ Towns north of the Balkan mountain range, which had already been taken over by the Russians, accepted widows and children arriving from Ottoman territories south of the Balkan mountain range, settling them in the houses abandoned by Turkish Muslims.¹⁵⁹ Relations between Bulgarian Christian refugees and their Bulgarian Christian hosts were tense. Theft, fights, and vandalism of crops in the fields occurred because food was scarce and many refugees had left their homes in a hurry without provisions or money.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ B. H. Sumner, "Russia and Panslavism in the Eighteen-Seventies," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (1935): 25–52, and "Ignatyev at Constantinople, 1864–1874: I," *Slavonic and East European Review* 11 (1933): 341–53, and "Ignatyev at Constantinople: II," *Slavonic and East European Review* 11(1933): 556–71; Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism: Russian Influence in the Internal Affairs of Bulgaria and Serbia, 1879–1886* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), passim.

¹⁵⁷ For the relationship between domestic reform initiatives and Russian international engagements, especially Russian commitment to and articulation of international law, see Holquist, "The Russian Empire as a 'Civilized State,'" 20–21.

¹⁵⁸ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 130–32.

¹⁵⁹ D. G. Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii i Grazhdanskoe Upravlenie v Bolgarii 1877–1878 gg. (gl. XIII)," *Russkaia Starina* 28 (December 1895), 75.

¹⁶⁰ Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii... (gl. XIII)," 76.

With the onset of the fall and winter in sight, Cherkaskii began looking for additional ways to help the Bulgarian Christian refugees. The local treasuries in each province under the civilian Russian authorities kept the money from the sale of animals and other movable property of Turkish Muslim refugees as well as the rent from their mills, vineyards, orchards, and arable plots. Record-keeping of what belonged to whom was imprecise or lacking altogether. Cherkaskii tapped these resources to support the Bulgarian Christian refugees while also relieving the Russians from some of the financial burdens of the war effort.¹⁶¹ He envisioned these types of measures as temporary. Yet with the progression of the war and the increasing difficulty of maintaining both troops and refugees, he allowed the Bulgarian Christian refugees to cultivate the plots of Turkish Muslim refugees.¹⁶² This was a fateful decision. Not long before the war broke out peasants still viewed cultivation as an act of landownership.

Cherkaskii made that decision in the midst of Russian military advances during which Muslim refugees left almost everything behind or quickly sold houses and plots of land.¹⁶³ In some cases, well-off Muslims entrusted their land holdings to Bulgarian Christian local notables and emigrated.¹⁶⁴ Bulgarian Christian cultivators and landholders began taking over abandoned land, especially after the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano in March 1878. In some cases, they even took over arable land, pastures, and wood groves by chasing away remaining Muslims, killing others, or burning *çiftliks*. The frequency and intensity of these occurrences varied from region to region.¹⁶⁵ The temporary Russian authorities were often unable to control these land seizures, even when they did try to do so.¹⁶⁶ But the PRA also operated with the assumption

¹⁶¹ Anuchin, "Kniaz V. A. Cherkaskii... (gl. XIII)," 77–78.

¹⁶² N. G. Levintov, "Agrarnye Otnosheniia v Bolgarii nakanune Osvobozhdeniia i Agrarnyi Perevorot 1878–1879 godov," in *Osvobozhdenie Bolgarii ot Turetskogo Iga (Sbornik Statei)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1953), 139–222, here 186–87.

¹⁶³ See Levintov, "Agrarnye Otnosheniia..." 139–222.

¹⁶⁴ OO-NBKM (Oriental'ski Otdel—Narodna Biblioteka "Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodi"), OAK 1254-18/5, 1258-18/9, 1260-18/11, 1261-18/12.

¹⁶⁵ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, passim; Liuben Berov "Agrarnoto Dvizhenie v Iztochna Rumeliia po vreme na Osvobozhdenieto," *Istoricheski Pregled* 12, no. 1 (1956): 3–6, and "Ikonomichestkite posleditsi ot Rusko-turksta voina prez 1877–1878 g.," in *Osvobozhdenie na Bŭlgariia ot tursko igo: sbornik statii* (Sofia: BKP, 1958), 415–47.

¹⁶⁶ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 7, l. 26–27.

that Turkish Muslim landlords monopolized the agricultural land while Bulgarian Christian peasants lived as tenants or held small land plots of low quality.¹⁶⁷ Thus, the limited scope of Cherkaskii's temporary measures enabled dramatic changes in land tenure to take place after the military hostilities ceased.

Cherkaskii's successor, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, had to deal with even more Christian refugees from the Ottoman province of Edirne and the region of Ottoman Macedonia. Bulgarian Christian cultivators and landholders appropriated land vacated by fleeing Muslims throughout the occupied territories. They asserted their possession over the land by beginning to cultivate and refusing to pay rent.¹⁶⁸ Apparently the PRA issued documents of land ownership to some cultivators.¹⁶⁹ Even nondisplaced villagers in the area of Filibe requested permission to rent the fields of Muslim refugees.¹⁷⁰

Dondukov-Korsakov worked to control the return of Muslim refugees in order to ease the burden of refugee settlement as well as to subvert challenges to the Russian authorities and their vision for an Orthodox Slavic polity. The Russians denounced acts of violence committed by Bulgarian Christians against Muslims since they had explicitly pledged to safeguard religious freedom, maintain order, and promote peaceful relations between Christians and Muslims.¹⁷¹ Dondukov-Korsakov ordered that one-half of the harvest from lands given to Bulgarian Christian refugees to cultivate be given to returning Turkish Muslim refugees. On the other hand, he was not prepared to move the former from the lands and houses of the latter because he thought it unjust to displace Bulgarian Christian refugees. Instead he pressured the Russian ambassador in Istanbul to demand the due Ottoman reparations to Russia so that Dondukov-Korsakov could distribute the money both among Muslims and Christians.¹⁷² The PRA gave food to Muslim refugees and provided them with transport back to their homes.¹⁷³ Yet Dondukov-Korsakov wrote that he could not be sure if Muslims went to their actual homes. He suspected the Ottoman govern-

¹⁶⁷ Levintov, "Agrarnyie Otnosheniia...", 199–200. Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 12–13, 71–72, 91.

¹⁶⁸ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 159, 176–77.

¹⁶⁹ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 136; BOA, BEO NGG d. 968 #102.

¹⁷⁰ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 136.

¹⁷¹ Holquist, "The Russian Empire as a 'Civilized State,'" 23.

¹⁷² Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 144–49.

¹⁷³ Holquist, "The Russian Empire as a 'Civilized State,'" 24.

ment of demanding the settlement even of people who had not resided in the Russian-occupied territories before the war.¹⁷⁴

In his memoirs Henry Drummond Wolff described the efforts of the Russian authorities in December 1878 to send “four or five hundred Turks from a distant village” in Eastern Rumelia to Edirne. Congratulating his personal authority and broadly Great Britain as the just and civilized power with respect to Russia and the Ottoman Empire, Wolff noted that he “wrote to the Governor-General [Stolipin] a very strong letter which he answered in the middle of the night, saying that the people had been brought in this way by mistake of the police. They were then sent back, comfortably enough, to the village.”¹⁷⁵ Wolff explained that the European Commission received letters by Turkish Muslims in Eastern Rumelia narrating abuses by Bulgarian Christians.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Dondukov-Korsakov regarded the grievances of Muslim refugees in Istanbul as theater aimed to impress the British.¹⁷⁷ To deal with the pressure of providing agricultural land to Christian refugees, he established entrance procedures for Muslims. Simultaneously he tried to provide relief to those refugees who were allowed to return. Dondukov-Korsakov’s measures for refugee management resulted in a General Ordinance.

The General Ordinance mandated that all returning Muslim refugees had to prove in court with the appropriate documentation their right of land possession.¹⁷⁸ Circassians¹⁷⁹ were expressly excluded from repatriation in all Russian-occupied territories and were expelled from the Principality of Bulgaria for having participated in the Ottoman irregular forces that put down the April Uprising.¹⁸⁰ Dondukov-Korsakov emphasized the need for orderly repatriation lest conflicts occur between returning

¹⁷⁴ Ovsianyi, *Sbornik Materialov*, v. 5: 22–30, 101–5, 161–64, 173–79, 219; vol. 6, 50.

¹⁷⁵ Wolff, *Rambling Recollections*, vol. 2, 217–18.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 216–17.

¹⁷⁷ Ovsyanii, *Sbornik*, v. 6: 50.

¹⁷⁸ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 144–45.

¹⁷⁹ That is, the Muslim mountaineers from the Caucasus who immigrated to the Ottoman Empire during the Russian conquest.

¹⁸⁰ Margarita Dobрева, “Circassian Colonization in the Danube Vilayet and Social Integration (Preliminary Notes),” *OTAM* 33 (Spring 2013): 1–30. Both the Treaty of San Stefano and the Treaty of Berlin mandated the expulsion of Circassians from the Principality of Bulgaria on account of their participation in the atrocities committed against Christians during the suppression of the April Uprising.

Muslims and the Christian refugees who had been settled in the abandoned places of the former.¹⁸¹ Conflicts among refugees over abandoned land occurred nevertheless.¹⁸² What the General Ordinance did accomplish was to prevent Muslim large landholders and notables from going back. A couple of well-known notables, Hacı Arif and Hacı Şaban, were in fact arrested when attempting to return, tried, and sentenced to death on the grounds of committing atrocities against Christians during the uprisings in Herzegovina and Bosnia as well as the April Uprising.¹⁸³ Following diplomatic negotiations, the two men were pardoned and sent to Istanbul, but their fate was instructive enough to make other men of such stature wait for the departure of the Russians before attempting repatriation.¹⁸⁴ Overall, Muslims began returning in greater numbers only after the departure of the Russian authorities. The refugee waves induced by the war as well as the refugee settlement and repatriation practices of the Russian authorities had redrawn the rural landscape of Eastern Rumelia and, more broadly, had contributed to reshaping landholding patterns as well as the demography of the region. As we will see in the next chapter, the PRA's legacy of handling Muslim refugees weighed heavily on the Eastern Rume-
lian administration as it had to enforce a pluralistic political model.

¹⁸¹ Ovsianyi, *Sbornik*, v. 5: 161–64.

¹⁸² Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 135–37, presents evidence about rather violent clashes among Bulgarians over abandoned land.

¹⁸³ Ovsianyi, *Sbornik*, v. 5: 101–4.

¹⁸⁴ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 169–71.

CHAPTER TWO

Repatriation, Postwar Reconstruction, and the Limits of Pluralism in Eastern Rumelia

“I arrived in Stara Zagora on 9 June 1879. Two years before I had been a despised ‘*giaur*’¹ and a ‘*dallü*,’² that is, a teacher who was forbidden to practice his profession in his hometown. And now I was coming back to take the position of *kaymakam bey*³ and to govern the place in which the local arrogant beys and all fanatical Turks will live when they return from their flight. What a reversal of fortune! [*Kakva prevratnost na südbata!*] Usually only centuries bring such radical change in the political situation. I was filled with mixed feelings of joy and responsibility.”⁴ Thus wrote Atanas T. Iliev in his memoirs published in 1926, a year before his death and long after he had completed his tenures as the assistant (one of three) to the prefect⁵ and then prefect of Stara Zagora/Zağra-i Atik. His sentiment of victory over the Ottoman Turkish Muslim ruling elites was tempered by the realization that enormous challenges lay ahead of Eastern Rumelian leaders. Other Bulgarian Christian contemporaries shared his

¹ *Gāvur* (Tr.): infidel. *Redhouse Türkçe/Osmanlıca-İngilizce Sözlüğü* [Redhouse Turkish/Ottoman-English dictionary] (Istanbul: SEV Matbaacık ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., 1997).

² Possibly ‘*deli*’: crazy, confused, idiotic. Ibid.

³ *Kaymakam* (Tr.): head official of a district. *Bey* is an honorific title referencing high social or political status or expression of respect for older men. Ibid.

⁴ Atanas T. Iliev, *Spomeni na Atanasa T. Iliev* (Sofia: P. Glushkov, 1926), 54.

⁵ Zhorzheta Nazürska, “Gavril Krüstevich i Direktsiia na Vütreshnite Dela v Iztochna Rumeliia (1879–1884 g.),” *Izvestiia na Dürzhavnite Arkhivi* 69 (1995): 18.

feelings.⁶ Iliev acknowledged that he, and by implication other Bulgarian Christian provincial officials, would be the new “masters” who would also have to guide the resettling of Turkish Muslim refugees within a different political context, one in which Ottoman sovereignty was sharply reduced. This frightened Turkish Muslims, both those who had fled and those who had managed to remain in their homes. They were no longer direct subjects of the sultan. Their subjecthood was refracted through the rule of a Bulgarian Christian governor who, while appointed by the sultan, shared authority with soon-to-be elected legislature in a province where Bulgarian Christians aimed to demonstrate their demographical majority.

Picking up life in circumstances radically changed by the April Uprising and the Russo-Ottoman War was no easy task for anyone, but it was especially onerous for Turkish Muslims. Religious belonging and language marked them—among Bulgarian Christians, and probably more so among those who had fled with the Russian troops—as symbols of Ottoman power. The civilian branch of the Russian army, as we saw in the previous chapter, identified “Turks” as landowners who had either usurped the lands of “Bulgarians” or oppressed them as tenants. Repatriation and postwar reconstruction were complicated by the dismantling of Ottoman land tenure, which solidified provincial subjecthood as terrain of struggle for resources and influence between officially demarcated ethno-religious communities—Bulgarian Christians and Turkish Muslims—rather than as an opportunity for building pluralistic society.

REPATRIATION AND THE LEGACY OF THE TANZIMAT

The Treaty of Berlin guaranteed the compensation and return of movable and immovable property to Muslim refugees regardless whether they chose to reside inside or outside Eastern Rumelia.⁷ Article 36 of the founding charter of Eastern Rumelia proclaimed the inviolability of all pri-

⁶ See Mikhail Iv. Madzharov, *Spomeni*, ed. Veselin Andreev (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Pisatel, 1968); Ivan Ev. Geshov, *Spomeni i Studii* (Sofia: Pechatnitsa P. Glushkov, 1928); Todor Ikonov, *Memoari*, ed. Toncho Zhechev (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Pisatel, 1973).

⁷ Goran Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko Upravlenie*, 140; I have also consulted here the Russian translation of the Treaty of Berlin published in N. Ovsianyi, *Bolgariia i Bolgary* (St. Petersburg: Voennaia Typ., 1900), 349–65.

vate property and expressly prohibited governmental confiscation.⁸ Under the pressure of the European Commission, the first provincial governor, Alexander (Aleko) Bogoridi (also known as Aleko Pasha), appointed special commissions in each provincial prefecture to handle the reinstatement of Muslims to their prewar properties. Only the records of the commission in the prefecture of Filibe survive and have been analyzed in Goran Todorov's study on the Provisional Russian Administration (PRA). After the tenure of the special commissions ended, Eastern Rumelian courts began handling the land claims of Muslim refugees. Unfortunately, for this beginning period of Eastern Rumelia's existence surviving court cases about land claims are not abundant. We know that refugees went to court to try and restore prewar land holdings thanks to a variety of documents housed in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul, such as petitions to the Ottoman government, correspondence among Ottoman ministries and agencies, as well as communications between the Porte and the Filibe administration. Taking land claims to court required some form of documentation. Cultivators often did not possess documents testifying to prewar leasing arrangements (which were mostly verbal).⁹ Smallholders often lacked documents about ownership registration in Ottoman ledgers and, since many documents had been destroyed in the war, retrieving such information was a lengthy and not always successful process. Others lacked documents because they had initiated but not completed the process of claiming ownership over land before the war. Finally, having papers was no guarantee for easy repatriation since landownership disputes and conflicts between Muslims and Christians, among Muslims, as well as among Christians were common for the couple of decades preceding the war.

To grasp the complexities of repatriation in Eastern Rumelia after the departure of the PRA we must first look into the land conflicts that occurred before the war because they shaped in large measure the outcome of repatriation as well as the lives of Muslims in the province. Prewar

⁸ The Bulgarian text of the charter was first published in Plovdiv in 1879 and is reprinted with certain abbreviations in Evgeni Iochev, *Zakonodatelstvoto v tsarstvo Bŭlgariia (1879–1944 g.): konstitutsiia, zakoni, motivi, dokladi, ukazi, naredbi, naredbi-zakoni* (Sofia: Fondatsiia Otvoreno Obshtestvo, [1999]), 34.

⁹ See Fani Milkova, *Pozemlenata sobstvenost v Bŭlgarskite zemi prez XIX vek* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1970), 232–33; and Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Volume 2: 1600–1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 858.

land conflicts resulted primarily from the land tenure reforms undertaken during the Tanzimat, especially the Land Code (1858) and the legislation stemming from it. They heightened or engendered social antagonisms along ethnic or religious lines or both, which played out in Eastern Rumelia to the disadvantage of local Turkish Muslims.



Mehmed Ağa, a Turkish resident in the Ottoman district of Zâgra-i Atîk, died sometime in the early 1870s. His daughter, Kâmile Hanım, who survived her three brothers, claimed to be an heiress and owner¹⁰ of her father's three farms (*çiftlik*s).¹¹ Kâmile Hanım first complained in 1874 that her fields and pastures had been usurped by villagers and tenants. The archive is silent on the action taken, if any, on her grievance. We hear of Kâmile Hanım again in 1880 when she had become a refugee of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78. She now petitioned the Istanbul and Filibe authorities to be reinstated into her properties and to collect the rent that had accrued from their usage in her absence. In this petition Kâmile Hanım added more details about her family problems before the war. She explained that “Hacı Veli, Hazır Beğ, Saib, the son of Hacı Emin, and the son of Georgi, broke into the house of my brother Ahmed Ağa and killed him and his children.”¹²

Kâmile Hanım's quest for property and rent over the next twelve years failed both in Eastern Rumelian and, subsequently, Bulgarian courts. Intercessions on her behalf by the imperial government in Istanbul did not help as well.¹³ Her troubles as a refugee were not unique. Neither were her troubles as a *çiftlik* owner. Another landholder by the name of Arif Ağazade bin Mehmed Efendi wrote to the Ottoman grand vizier that “the moderate requests of the Muslim people (*ahali-i İslamiye*) are hindered in all sorts of ways by the courts.”¹⁴ Furthermore, he complained that even though the founding charter of Eastern Rumelia as well as Ottoman law and custom protected the possessions of landholders and property (*mal*) in general, justice was not being carried out in the province.

Although Kâmile Hanım's landownership troubles started with the death of her father, her ordeal was more than a personal matter. The

¹⁰ *ba tapu aide-i tasarrufunda olup.*

¹¹ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 3/2, s. 210.

¹² BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 131/5, s. 71.

¹³ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 6/3, s. 18, 19, 46, 58, 76, 77, 78.

¹⁴ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 1/37, s. 1.

1860s and 1870s were full of worries for *çiftlik* owners in the Ottoman Balkans and western Anatolia. The Land Code and subsequent legislation on landed property aimed to promote the single usufruct property right. These measures inadvertently provoked conflicts between those who profited from leasing agricultural land and those who made a living from cultivating agricultural land. Dwelling on these types of conflicts, which stemmed from the transformation of landholding patterns, will enable us to begin charting the complex ethno-religious calculus that shaped Eastern Rumelian subjecthood (and Bulgarian citizenship later on).



Two understandings of land ownership existed in the Ottoman Empire until the promulgation of the Land Code: 1) possession of land; and 2) possession and heritability of the usufruct right. There was a fundamental legal distinction between state or public land (*miri*) and private (in the sense of freehold) land (*mülk*). Lands and other properties that served religious and benevolent purposes fell into yet another category, the so-called *waqf* (*vakıf* in Ottoman Turkish) or pious-charitable endowments. *Vakıf* properties most often served the public and were not subject to state confiscation. Theoretically only *mülk* properties could be turned into *vakıf*, though in practice the Ottoman sultans awarded land grants (i.e., *miri*) for exceptional military service, which were treated as full private property (*mülk*) and often quickly turned into endowments. *Mülk* land was deemed to be full property whereas *miri* was technically owned by the Ottoman state that held the right of absolute ownership (*rakabe*) over all land. The state leased land to peasants who were thus its tenants. Most arable land, especially grain-producing land, was classified as *miri*. Peasants who lived from agriculture paid taxes to the treasury and held the usufruct right; they could inherit it even though they had no title to the land they cultivated. During the Tanzimat, however, Ottoman reformers began defining rights to land in more individualist and exclusive terms. Likewise, the method of assessing and collecting taxes shifted in many instances from communities to individuals.¹⁵ Efforts at replacing tax farmers with salaried officials further emphasized the individual proprietor as the financial and social foundation of the new empire.

¹⁵ Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Land Disputes and Ethno-politics: Northwestern Anatolia, 1877–1912," in *Land Rights, Ethno-Nationality, and Sovereignty in History*, ed. Stanley Engerman and Jacob Metzger (London: Routledge, 2004), 157.

Çiftliks defied the distinction between *miri* and *mülk*. Or rather, to be more precise, *çiftliks* understood as landed estates operated by tenant labor blurred the legal differences between state and freehold landed property. The Ottoman Turkish word *çiftlik* basically means farm. The word *çift* (pair) refers to the land workable by a pair of oxen; *çiftlik* primarily designated fields used for grain cultivation, whose size varied depending on the location, but were intended to support the subsistence needs of a peasant household (*hane*). The male peasant at the head of the household paid a fee to the state to acquire land and was awarded the right to inherit the usufruct right provided household members sustained cultivation and paid all dues and taxes, which depended on the fertility of the land as well as the labor capacity of the members of the household. Until about the early seventeenth century the *çiftlik* was usually inside a *timar*, which was a nonhereditary land grant given by the sultan typically in exchange for military service.¹⁶ By the beginning of the eighteenth century this system had been gradually replaced with tax farming, which provided a steady flow of revenue to the Imperial Treasury and decreased peasant and tribal mobility, while also enabling tax farmers to accumulate wealth and also to consolidate *çiftliks*.¹⁷

Çiftliks emerged on state lands in various ways. For instance, local notables, city-based merchants, or irregular soldiers usurped the holdings of subsistence farmers in times of war or political and social instability as happened during the Celali Revolts in sixteenth-century Anatolia or the Kırcaali unrest in the Balkans during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.¹⁸ By the beginning of the eighteenth century provincial officials and tax farmers as well as their extended families used their positions and wealth to aggrandize administrative power, especially to monopolize violence, to develop patron–client relationships, and to

¹⁶ Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Volume 1: 1300–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 108–9, 147–53.

¹⁷ Ariel C. Salzmann, “Measures of Empire: Tax Farmers and the Ottoman Ancien Régime, 1695–1807” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1995); Erden Atilla Aytekin, “Land, Rural Classes, and Law: Agrarian Conflict and State Regulation in the Ottoman Empire, 1830s–1860s” (PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2006).

¹⁸ Vera Mutafchieva, *Kürdzhalisko vreme* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1977); Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Strashimir Dimitrov, “Za Agrarnite Otnosheniia v Bŭlgariia prez XVIII v.,” in *Paisii Khilendarski i Negovata Epokha (1762–1962)* (Sofia: BAN, 1962), 129–62.

enlarge landholdings.¹⁹ This confluence between officeholder and tax farmer in practice meant that cultivators often lost the usufruct right²⁰ and became dependent on the *çiftlik* lords who could also be the local tax farmers. Since they paid a portion of the expected taxes upfront to the Imperial Treasury and then collected the rest and more from the cultivators, extortion and exploitation of peasants as well as peasant indebtedness were common.²¹ Land consolidation into a *çiftlik* also occurred simply when the opportunity was present since land proffered both economic opportunities and social status.²² Thus, even though in its original meaning *çiftlik* stood for farm, the prevalent usage of the term by the mid-nineteenth century had come to signify, in the Balkans especially, “an extensive arable holding” worked by hired labor or tenant farmers.²³ It is still a matter of debate²⁴ whether this development shows the commercialization of Ottoman agriculture and its incorporation into the world economy, as some historians have argued, or decentralization and imperial weakness, as others have emphasized.²⁵ Scholars, however, agree that local notables,

¹⁹ Ali Yaycıoğlu, “Provincial Power-holders and the Empire in the Late Ottoman World: Conflict or Partnership?,” in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2012), 441–46.

²⁰ Gilles Veinstein, “On the *Çiftlik* Debate,” in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, ed. Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 35–57.

²¹ Dimitrov, “Za Agrarnite Otnoshenii.”

²² Veinstein, “On the *Çiftlik* Debate.”

²³ The first formulation belongs to Veinstein, “On the *Çiftlik* Debate,” and the second to Halil İnalcık, “Çiftlik,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, 2nd ed. (Brill Online, 2014), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/c-i-ftli-k-SIM_1613; the emphasis on hired or tenant labor as the defining characteristic of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century *çiftlik* is Michael Palairé’s, *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914: Evolution without Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 44; according to Strashimir Dimitrov, by the mid-nineteenth century *çiftlik* already meant large farm in the Balkans, see “Chiflishkoto Stopanstvo prez 50–70 godini na XIX vek,” *Istoricheski Pregled* 11, no. 2 (1955): 3–35.

²⁴ Emblematic of this transformation was the changing social origin of landholders in the countryside from “landed seigniors” to urban capitalists; and secondly, this was accompanied by the practical enslavement of peasants, who were no longer tax-paying subjects holding fields in perpetuity but had become “proletarianized wage-laborer[s]” losing the usufruct right to local notables (Veinstein’s formulation, “On the *Çiftlik* Debate,” 36).

²⁵ See Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak, eds., *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

bureaucrats, tax farmers, and members of the military who created *çiftlik*s profited from export and trade of agricultural and animal products but they combined this economic activity with a host of other entrepreneurial ventures such as the farming out of state revenues, recruitment of troops and the collection of provisions and livestock for the army as well as credit transactions.²⁶

The Ottoman government barely tried to regulate the formation of *çiftlik*s until the promulgation of the Land Code. Nonetheless, a decade before its promulgation the Porte began streamlining procedures for registering land deeds by setting up a central government office. The code's implementation led to the development of more laws that imposed uniform sets of rules on immovable property, thereby erasing the centuries-old distinction between *miri* and *mülk* land.²⁷ As for defining ownership, title to the land became much more important than revenue from land.²⁸ The code included provisions that made it easier to sell and mortgage land while also requiring that arable land not be left uncultivated for more than three years. It stipulated that only individuals could register ownership of plots. In addition to promoting steady cultivation for increased tax revenue, this measure also aimed to diminish pre-Land Code litigation when individuals claimed in court ownership of state and endowment lands.²⁹ Using or farming land collectively did not legally entitle groups of tenants on a landed estate, groups of cultivators, or entire villages to register it.³⁰

The provision for individual registration caused much turmoil on *çiftlik*s and frightened *çiftlik* holders who de facto owned a piece of *miri* land and leased it to cultivators. The Land Code attempted to regulate the practice of forming *çiftlik*s by outlining the conditions under which vil-

²⁶ Veinstein, "On the *Çiftlik* Debate," 48–53.

²⁷ Kemal H. Karpat, "The Land Regime, Social Structure, and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire," in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 348–49.

²⁸ Terzibaşoğlu, "Land Disputes and Ethno-Politics," 157.

²⁹ Fani G. Milkova, *Pozemlenata Sobstvenost v Bŭlgarskite Zemi prez XIX vek* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1970), 160–63; F. G. Milkova, "Sur la tenure et le caractère de la propriété d'état des terres miriye dans l'Empire ottoman du XVe au XIXe siècle," *Études balkaniques* II, no. 5 (1966): 155–75; Karpat, "The Land Regime," 346.

³⁰ E. Attila Aytekin, "Agrarian Relations, Property and Law: An Analysis of the Land Code of 1858 in the Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 6 (2009): 936–38.

lage land could become part of a *çiftlik*. It also set the terms of inheritance via devolution.³¹ Cultivators understandably wished to turn the usufruct right into landownership while the *çiftlik* holders aimed to solidify their “lease” into landownership. Landowners’ and cultivators’ antagonistic interests shaped agrarian relations throughout the Ottoman Balkans as well as western and northern Anatolia for the remaining part of the century.³² In Bosnia, Herzegovina, and the Vidin region (modern northwest Bulgaria), where landowners tended to be Muslim while cultivators Christian, claims to land became violent. The land regime in the Vidin region, known as *gospodarlık*, obliged the Christian cultivators to work for the Muslim landlord, sell surplus produce to him at prices lower than in markets where he sold it, provide an annual supply of firewood, and pay a variety of “taxes” in kind on cereals.³³ The landlord also held police authority over the villagers, which was enforced by his stewards.³⁴ The oppressiveness of the *gospodarlık* was underscored by the Tanzimat’s emphasis on the protection of life, honor, and property as well as a regularized and fairer system of taxation. Within a decade of the Gulhane Edict (1839), which inaugurated the Tanzimat, two major peasant revolts broke out in the Vidin region demanding the abolition of the existing land relations and the impropropriation of cultivators.³⁵ Violence in these cases was not an example of revived hatreds between religious groups which had simmered for centuries but rather an indication of profound socio-economic change. Altering land tenure was a process that provoked conflicts due to opposing understandings of property as well as diverging economic interests. On one hand stood the cultivators who viewed their labor as entitling them to landownership. Against them were the landlords who dominated local and provincial administrations and wished to preserve for themselves an inalienable piece of land. The imperial government operated within this conflict, viewing the formalization of property rights primarily as a strategy for increasing revenue and administrative

³¹ Aytekin, “Agrarian Relations, Property and Law,” 943.

³² See Halil İnalçık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi* (Istanbul: EREN, 1992); Strashimir Dimitrov, *Vŭstanieto ot 1850 godina v Bŭlgariia* (Sofia: BAN, 1972); Aytekin, “Land, Rural Classes, and Law,” *passim*.

³³ İnalçık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, 83–107; Aytekin, “Land, Rural Classes, and Law,” 74–77.

³⁴ Aytekin, “Land, Rural Classes, and Law,” 39–40.

³⁵ Dimitrov, *Vŭstanieto ot 1850*; İnalçık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, 29–44.

centralization.³⁶ It acknowledged the landlords' wish as legitimate but at the same time also planned to take over the other lands and either rent or sell them.³⁷

The existence of *çiftliks* had not led to the universal loss of the usufruct right among Christian or Muslim peasants because *çiftliks* took up only part of the arable land in the Ottoman Balkans and were unevenly distributed. They also varied considerably in size as well as in profitability.³⁸ Thus, land pressures and the condition of peasants varied across the Ottoman Balkans. Until the late nineteenth century agricultural methods in much of the territory of present-day Bulgaria remained extensive, except in densely populated and hilly areas, which was a reflection of the generally favorable ratio between land and labor. During the 1860s, *çiftlik* owners in the plains north of the Balkan mountain range sold plots at low prices because there was a shortage of hired labor.³⁹ Large landed estates had developed in these parts, especially in the areas of the Danubian port city of Ruse at least since the mid- to late eighteenth century.⁴⁰ Nonethe-

³⁶ See Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett, "The Application of the 1858 Land Code in Greater Syria: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1984), esp. 414–16, and Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems and their Social Impact in Syria around the Middle of the Nineteenth Century," in *ibid.*, 371–96. Instructive here are Ottoman efforts in the 1870s to settle and tax the Bedouins and other semi-nomadic populations in the Mosul region and in the Transjordan after the promulgation of the Land Code. Monopolizing resources was not less important than enhancing central control through sedentarization, though often it was local notables and merchants trading in agricultural goods who profited the most from efforts to clarify and standardize land ownership. See the Ottoman government decree issued to the Amir of Shamr in Akram Fouad Khater, *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011), 14–16; Reşat Kasaba, "Nomads and Tribes in the Ottoman Empire," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 11–24; Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chapter 3; Sarah D. Shields, *Mosul before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 137–49, 176–85.

³⁷ Aytekin, "Land, Rural Classes, and Law," 45–55.

³⁸ On this point, see Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³⁹ Palaiet, *The Balkan Economies*, 46, 58.

⁴⁰ See Dimitrov "Chiflishkoto Stopanstvo."

less, according to Slavka Draganova's study of Ruse, Shumen, and Silistra for the period 1860–70, landless or near-landless peasants were a minority.⁴¹ Agricultural workers tended to go across the Danube to the much larger and commercially oriented estates of Romania where the pay was higher.⁴²

Unlike in Vidin, the efforts of the Tanzimat Ottoman government to regulate *çiftlik*s in the Tırhala *sancak* in the *vilayet* of Selanik in the 1860s were somewhat less contentious. The Porte set up a commission consisting of local notables and representatives of the landlords (mostly Muslim) and cultivators (mostly Christian). This process was less violent than in Vidin since peasants had unexpected leverage: leaving cultivation in pursuit of more lucrative activities such as animal husbandry, livestock raising, and transportation. Official interests to keep peasants cultivating the land led to the abolition of the positions of the *çiftlik* steward and other landlord employees who extracted produce from the peasants. Unexpectedly, the abolition of the steward position led to rising peasant indebtedness. *Çiftlik* stewards were sources of credit for the peasants, who could set aside some of their produce and use it to pay their debts. In their absence, cultivators resorted to moneylenders, who refused to accept produce as a form of payment.⁴³

Bulgarian historians during the socialist period argued that, in general, Muslims had access to more and often better land while Bulgarian Christian peasants tended to rent land or enter into sharecropping arrange-

⁴¹ Slavka Draganova, "Différentiation de fortune dans les villages de la Bulgarie du nord-est durant les années 60 et 70 du XIXe siècle," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 8 (1980): 74–86.

⁴² Palairot, *The Balkan Economies*, 46. *Çiftlik* formation occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina which had become a frontier zone after the empire lost its Hungarian territories by the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699). The recurrent Ottoman–Austrian wars in the eighteenth century caused flight, migration, and hence ample opportunities for misappropriating the holdings of cultivators. These frequent migrations gradually changed the demography of the region. The countryside was often populated by Orthodox and Catholic Christians while urban areas were predominantly Muslim. Hence the usurpation of arable plots by Muslim landlords or Muslim urban residents (merchants or officials, for instance) or overtaxation engendered a religiously inflected relationship in which the *çiftlik* proprietor was Muslim while the tenant was Christian. See Edin Hajdarpasic, "Whose Bosnia?: National Movements, Imperial Reforms, and the Political Re-Ordering of the Late Ottoman Balkans 1840–1875" (PhD diss. University of Michigan, 2008), 89–97.

⁴³ Aytekin, "Land, Rural Classes, and Law," 79, 86–87.

ments.⁴⁴ *Çiftliks* in the eighteenth-century southern and eastern Balkans, which were operated by hired labor and exported agricultural produce, were generally owned by Turkish Muslim officials, tax farmers, and merchants. Many landowners also consolidated *çiftliks* in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by purchasing lands that had been confiscated by the Imperial Treasury and then sold at auctions.⁴⁵ Historian Goran Todorov has written that most of the arable land in Eastern Rumelia was in the hands of Turkish notables and the ordinary Turkish population.⁴⁶ This inequality between Turkish Muslims and Bulgarian Christians, according to Todorov and others, ended when entire villages were deserted by Muslims fleeing from the Russian troops during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78. Then Bulgarian Christians fleeing from the Ottoman army or those from neighboring villages seized abandoned lands.⁴⁷ That said, historian Strashimir Dimitrov (who also wrote during the socialist period) argued that, in addition to peasant impoverishment, the consolidation of *çiftliks* was accompanied in some cases by increased peasant mobility and land sales among peasants themselves.⁴⁸ Tevfik Güran's study of Muslim, Christian, and mixed villages in the hinterland of Filibe for the year 1844 revealed that smallholding (approximately 3 ares) prevailed.⁴⁹

More recently Stefka Parveva's research on Muslim and Christian villages in the hinterland of the city of Edirne during the seventeenth century suggests that peasants remained the main producers and landholders, and

⁴⁴ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*; Khristo Khristov, *Agrarniiaat Vŭpros v Bŭlgarskata Natsionalna Revoliutsiia* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1976); Khristo Gandev, *Zarazhdane na Kapitalisticheski Otnosheniia v Chiflishkoto Stopanstvo na Severozapadna Bŭlgariia prez XVIII vek* (Sofia: BAN, 1962).

⁴⁵ Dimitrov, "Za Agrarnite Otnosheniia," esp. 149–52.

⁴⁶ His evidence for that is based on figures provided by the French and Russian representatives at the European Commission that was formed at the Berlin Peace Conference to set up Eastern Rumelia. See also D. Kosev, "Selskoto dvizhenie v Bŭlgariia v kraia na XIX v.; Osnovavaneto na BZNS i otnoshenieto na BRSDP kum selskiia vupros," *Istoricheski Pregled* 5, no. 5 (1948–49): 549–87. Kosev advances the same idea as G. Todorov.

⁴⁷ Khristov, *Agrarniiaat Vŭpros*, esp. 53–55 and *passim*.

⁴⁸ Dimitrov, "Za Agrarnite Otnosheniia," 158–59.

⁴⁹ Tevfik Güran, *Structure économique et sociale d'une région de campagne dans l'Empire ottoman vers le milieu du XIXe s.: étude comparée de neuf villages de la nahiye de Koyuntepe, Sanjak de Filibe* (Sofia: Centre international d'information sur les sources de l'histoire balkanique et méditerranéenne, 1980).

some even amassed plots into small-scale *çiftlik*s. Stockbreeding, viticulture, vegetable gardens, and orchards helped peasants to prosper. In general, she argues, villages that relied almost exclusively on grain production were poorer than villages that also sold wine, fruits and vegetables to residents of Edirne.⁵⁰ During the 1860s, peasants bought fragments of *çiftlik* lands further east of Filibe in the Kazınlık area, and more broadly in the region of Ottoman Thrace (which included future Eastern Rumelia). The price of land, though, was often high.⁵¹ Some Bulgarian Christian *chorbadzhii* and budding Tanzimat elites also bought land and owned *çiftlik*s that produced agricultural commodities destined for markets throughout the empire.⁵²

In sum, land relations in the Ottoman Balkans on the eve of the Russo-Ottoman War were marked by dramatic changes accompanied by conflicts. Land circulation had increased due to a couple of related factors: 1) the promulgation of the Land Code and related legislation that encouraged individual ownership; and 2) the uneven distribution of *çiftlik*s run by tenant labor and oriented toward commercial agriculture. In the process of postwar repatriation, land conflicts were in large part embedded in these prewar changes. *Çiftlik*s became sites of land ownership conflicts both among Muslims and between Muslims and Christians because the Land Code and subsequent legislation provided cultivators with the opportunity to unite legally into a single property right their long-term work with the piece of land under their cultivation. In other words, both Muslim Turks and Christian Bulgarians could become landowners. Small-scale landowners could meanwhile enlarge their landholdings through purchase. In addition, they could claim ownership on a piece of *çiftlik* under their cultivation if they also worked as tenants. These land tenure changes were further complicated by the Russo-Ottoman War because it caused a refugee crisis, land seizures as well as the radical circumscription of Ottoman sovereignty. In Eastern Rumelia, as we will see below, land ownership problems became a question of sovereignty for the Ottoman Empire and its fledgling borderland province.

⁵⁰ Stefka Parveva, "Rural Agrarian and Social Structure in the Edirne Region during the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century," *Études Balkaniques* 38, no. 3 (2000): 55–90.

⁵¹ Palaioret, *The Balkan Economies*, 46.

⁵² Georgi Pletn'ov, *Chorbadzhiite i Bŭlgarskata Natsionalna Revoliutsiia* (Veliko Tŭrnovo: IK "Vital," 1993).

LAND OWNERSHIP AND SOVEREIGNTY

Kâmile Hanım's inheritance rights and property came under attack both from her Christian tenants and from other Muslim villagers within the Land Code context of claiming individual landownership. She did not state so explicitly, but seemed not to have had a title deed (*tapu senedi* or *sened*). The administration in Filibe described her as holding the title to the usufruct right,⁵³ but there is no indication that she was issued a *tapu senedi* to confirm her as the legitimate heir as we would expect in land transactions following the promulgation of the Land Code. In any case, it is not clear that she would have benefited from having a *sened*. The villagers of Aziz Beyli (*kaza* of Hasköy/Haskovo) appointed an agent in the summer of 1882 and proved in court that the *sened* of the refugee Fatma Hanım for 680 *dönüm*⁵⁴ of land was not valid even though it had been confirmed as such two years earlier in Istanbul. She pleaded with the Ottoman government to intervene on her behalf without any apparent result.⁵⁵ In one case, Ahmed Ağa from Zağra-i Cedid/Nova Zagora spent a few years trying to reclaim his extensive land holdings by gathering documentation from Ottoman institutions and marshaling it in court.⁵⁶ He lost in court and was ordered to cover all expenses. In the meantime, he sent one of his men to the prefecture's special land commission to have the validity of his *seneds* confirmed and appealed the court decision. Even though he managed to talk the judge into absolving him from financial responsibility due to his impoverishment as a result of the war, Ahmed Ağa was nevertheless jailed in the evening of the day the trial was over. He was told at the police station that the reasons for his arrest were his debt to the court and his suspected involvement in a serious crime, about which Ahmed Ağa provided no detail, besides dismissing it as another example of injustice in Eastern Rumelia. He spent six days in prison and also lost the appeal, but continued imploring for help both the Ottoman representative to the province, Ali Haydar Efendi, and the imperial government in Istanbul, only

⁵³ *ba tapu aide-i tasarrufunda olup* or *ba tapu taht tasarrufunda olup*.

⁵⁴ 1 *dönüm* equals approximately 980 m² or about ¼ acre, *Redhouse Türkçe/Osmanlıca-İngilizce Sözlüğü*.

⁵⁵ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 3/2 s. 144. One *dönüm* equals approximately 940 m² or ¼ acre, *Redhouse Türkçe/Osmanlıca-İngilizce Sözlüğü*.

⁵⁶ His case can be traced in BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 3/2, s. 64, 70–79, 116–21, 131, 132, 140–42, 156, 157; BOA, BEO NGG d. 969, # 466, 477, 504, 508, 539.

to conclude with exasperation: “All the doors of justice are closed for us [*Artık bütün adalet kapıları bizim için oraca kapandığı*].”⁵⁷

The failure of *çiftlik* holders like Ahmed Ağa⁵⁸ to use documentation successfully exposes one of the main challenges that Muslim refugees faced in Eastern Rumelia. When claiming landownership they had to navigate the competing bids to sovereignty of empire and its “quasi-sovereign” borderland.⁵⁹ Muslim refugees unwittingly intensified this competition when they invoked Istanbul’s imperial authority. This was so because Eastern Rumelian administrators asserted provincial autonomy by striving for monopoly over land tenure knowledge, laws, and practices. While relying on Ottoman law and custom, provincial authorities interpreted imperial documentation in accordance with local needs. They could do so because of discrepancies in imperial documents, loss of many during the war, and due to the gradual replacement (beginning in 1880) of the Ottoman title deed, the *tapu senedi*, with the Eastern Rumelian title deed, the *vladalo*. For example, in making his case, Ahmed Ağa procured various documents from the imperial bureaucracy in Istanbul, prompting the participation of several administrative bodies, such as the Imperial Department of Cadastral Records, the Imperial Treasury, the Tax Department, the Forest Department, the Ministry of Finance, and the Council of State. His misfortune, though not unique,⁶⁰ was that these agencies did not agree completely on what constituted the property that he aimed to recover.

He and his alleged brother Şerif Beğ had apparently bought the *çiftlik* in the village of Kadı a year before the outbreak of the Russo-Ottoman War when the previous *çiftlik* holder Hacı Hatice Hanım died without legal heirs. Ahmed Ağa claimed that the *çiftlik* consisted of approximately 2,300 *dönüm* arable land, 1,600 *dönüm* wood groves, and 150 *dönüm* pasture. But upon closer inspection, the imperial representative in Eastern Rumelia, Ali Haydar Effendi, doubted that the woods were part of the *çiftlik*. It also turned out that the Tax Department had deemed Şerif Beğ insolvent and had decided not to give him the land agreed upon earlier, even suggesting that part of the *çiftlik* be committed to the charge of another person. Subsequently, the Tax Department and the Imperial

⁵⁷ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 3/2 s. 64.

⁵⁸ See also BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 9/1, s. 74, 76.

⁵⁹ This is Lauren Benton’s term, “From International Law to Imperial Constitutions: The Problem of Quasi-Sovereignty, 1870–1900,” *Law and History Review* 26, no. 3 (2008): 595–619.

⁶⁰ See Kâmile Hanım’s case in BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 6/3, s. 18, 19, 46, 58, 76, 77, 78.

Treasury agreed that with legal financial sponsorship Şerif Beğ could be allowed to take over part of the arable land and be issued a *sened* for the wood groves. There is a note by a merchant acting as Şerif Beğ's guarantor, which states that Şerif Beğ paid the treasury. However, no other official document confirming the payment exists. During the war, Ahmed Ağa submitted a petition signed by him as Şerif Beğ's agent, in which he demanded taking possession of the *çiftlik*, but he did not procure the necessary sum. In short, the imperial government had not come to a definite conclusion about the legal status of these two men as owners. Its attitude, however, changed rather dramatically following Ottoman defeat in the 1877–78 war. After the establishment of Eastern Rumelia, the Ministry of Finance and the Council of State instructed the Tax Department to consider legal and final all land transactions that were performed before the Russian occupation, but not to recognize those done after that. Accordingly, in its correspondence with Eastern Rumelian officials from 1882 onward, the imperial government referred to Ahmed Ağa and Şerif Beğ as joint buyers and owners of the *çiftlik*. In short, asserting the ownership rights of Muslims in Eastern Rumelia became tied to Ottoman sovereignty and tacit questioning of provincial autonomy.

Eastern Rumelian authorities understood this imperial strategy and, perhaps ironically, resorted to imperial administrative knowledge to buttress provincial autonomy. Contradictory interests resulted in Filibe and Istanbul stalling each other's efforts to settle the issue. The provincial authorities had obtained information about the status of the *çiftlik* from the Imperial Treasury and the Office of Records and insisted that Şerif Beğ had not paid in full. It is not clear if the merchant's note was forwarded to the Eastern Rumelian administration. In fact, it had begun developing doubts about Ahmed Beğ's authenticity and wrote to the Office of the Ottoman Prime Minister that Ahmed Ağa was an impostor, who developed a claim at the expense of Şerif Beğ. This suspicion may have arisen because Şerif Beğ seemed not to have set foot in Eastern Rumelia at all nor to have written anything to anyone regarding the whole issue. In this vein, Director of Internal Affairs Grigor Nachovich requested from the Ottoman Ministry of Finance an official testimony (*şehadetname*) about the entire transaction concerning the *çiftlik* as well as explicit refutation or confirmation of the suspicion concerning Ahmed Beğ's identity. The testimony prepared by the Department of Public Revenue in April 1882 confirmed Ahmed Beğ's version and reminded that the office of records in the district of İslimiye/Sliven was supposed to have the same information. Performing this verification in Eastern Rumelia, however, was impos-

sible because the correct ledger was apparently lost during the war, which was the reason Nachovich had sought answers with the imperial government in the first place. The testimony also did not address Nachovich's request: Ahmed Ağa is not mentioned at all. Finally, the copy of the testimony intended for Eastern Rumelia did not reach it, though its content was conveyed through ordinary correspondence. Ahmed Ağa is mentioned in other documents emanating from Istanbul as Şerif Beğ's brother as well as partner in the possession of the *çiftlik*; as of fall 1882 the verdict of the testimony was being reiterated to the provincial administration without any apparent effect.

Such inconsistencies defied the efforts of the Eastern Rumelian administration to assert its competence regarding and monopoly over land knowledge. For instance, in 1882 Governor Aleko Bogoridi requested copies of lost title deeds and asked the Office of the Ottoman Prime Minister to initiate a process of verification of existing ones.⁶¹ The imperial Office of Records had modified the format of the document, possibly to curb the tricks of postwar opportunists who acquired land for themselves by posing as the appointed agents (*vekil*) of refugees seeking to reclaim land.⁶² This modification provoked confusion in the province as well as Bogoridi's anger that such a change was made without his knowledge.⁶³ The Porte's action, including the neglect to inform Bogoridi, simultaneously reveals a demonstration of imperial sovereignty and recognition of how entangled imperial and provincial claims to sovereignty were. Bogoridi's expectation that he would be involved in the imperial decision curiously betrays both Eastern Rumelia's dependence on the Ottoman Empire as well as its desire to be treated as an equal.

Çiftlik holders, like Ahmed Ağa, also failed to present widely accepted stories of ownership because during repatriation prewar land conflicts resurfaced, especially those between landowners and cultivators, over the single usufruct property right that the Land Code and subsequent land legislation advanced. For Ahmed Ağa, Arif Ağa Zade bin Mehmed Efendi, Kâmile Hanım, Fatma Hanım, Fâzile Hanım of İslimiye, and other Eastern

⁶¹ BOA, BEO NGG d. 967 #180.

⁶² BOA, MTZ. RŞ 9/5, s. 6, 7, BEO NGG d. 969 #658, A. MTZ. RŞ 9/1, s. 73; Todorov, *Vremmento Rusko*, 144.

⁶³ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 131/5, s. 42, 76. In Ahmed Beğ's case the Tax Department feared that refugee requests for title deeds and the legalization of land sales might spur the spread of false documents.

Rumelian Turkish Muslim landowners,⁶⁴ an important source of discontent and financial worry was the fact that after the war they could not collect rent that had accrued to them. Fâzile Hanım, whose Bozacı *çiftlik* was registered in the Imperial Department of Records, kept in touch with her tenant, Celaledin, who informed her that the villager Kiro (who may have had sharecropping or tenant arrangements with her) had stolen agricultural produce from the *çiftlik*. She kept appealing to the Porte for intercession on her behalf but nothing was accomplished. By claiming rent from their prewar lands, *çiftlik* holders clashed with the cultivators who, aided by the emerging postwar order, had the opportunity to realize the promise of the Land Code, i.e., to develop the usufruct right into full ownership.

Eastern Rumelian local authorities aided Bulgarian Christian cultivators when they challenged the rent claims of Muslim *çiftlik* holders. For instance, soon after the foundation of Eastern Rumelia, the financial inspector of Zağra-i Cedid brought a lawsuit against Şerif Beğ claiming that he was not the legal owner. Villagers were allowed to cultivate the *çiftlik* lands and de facto supported in refusing to pay any rent to Ahmed Ağa. Hacı Küçüköğlu Hacı Nuri Ağa from Filibe did win a lawsuit against the Filibe tax inspector, Mr. Barkalov, who, in the former's absence, had given some of the 350 *dönüm* *çiftlik* lands in the village of Landus to the peasants to use as pasture. The remaining portion of Hacı Küçüköğlu Hacı Nuri Ağa's land presumably became part of Eastern Rumelia's land fund, which included abandoned or unclaimed lands.⁶⁵ The Tax Department confirmed Hacı Küçüköğlu Hacı Nuri Ağa's possession of a title deed for the land and the Filibe district court recognized the validity of the documents. Barkalov, however, did not accept the verdict. Apparently, Hacı Küçüköğlu Hacı Nuri Ağa and his brother also ran a casino in Filibe, which placed him in the category of absentee landlords whose holdings had been attractive to cultivators in the post-Land Code Ottoman society.⁶⁶ Now, Eastern Rumelian officials like Barkalov were helping cultivators in their efforts to become landowners and in the meantime ensuring the primacy of provincial over imperial institutions. Barkalov initiated an appeal that took

⁶⁴ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 9/1, s. 74, 76; see also A. MTZ. RŞ 3/2, s. 187, A.MTZ. RŞ 1/37, s. 1, 3, A.MTZ.RŞ 1/13; see also Levintov, "Agrarnyie Otnosheniia v Bolgarii," 139–222.

⁶⁵ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 9/1, s. 37, 68, 70, and A. MTZ. RŞ 131/5, s. 125.

⁶⁶ As well as to the Ottoman state when looking for places to settle Muslim refugees from Russia. Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Land Disputes and Ethno-politics," *passim*.

so long that by the time Hacı Küçüköğlu Hacı Nuri Ağa complained to the grand vizier about the delay (1884), three years had already elapsed. The Porte repeatedly urged the administration in Filibe to restore Hacı Küçüköğlu Hacı Nuri Ağa's land without delay. There is no evidence that this happened.

Muslim refugees and the imperial government in Istanbul resented the way the PRA had handled refugee settlement and were mounting discontent with the ways in which the emergent Eastern Rumelian administration was dealing with repatriation. Thus, under the pressure of the European Commission, Governor Bogoridi appointed special commissions in each prefecture to handle the reinstatement of refugees. The surviving records of the Filibe commission indicate that it was composed of both Bulgarian Christians and Turkish Muslims and that some of its members had been politically and economically prominent before the creation of the province. The commission, which functioned for a year (1879–80), was headed by Stoian Kableskov, a member of the prewar advisory council (*meclis*) and a *çiftlik* holder; the other members were the merchant and moneylender Nikola Nedkovich, Ivan Kuzmov, Mehmed Efendi, Veki Efendi, and Y. Kirov. Historian Goran Todorov calculated that from a total of 1,946 decisions, 738 specifically concerned land restitution to Turkish Muslims and dealt with the terms of leasing their land holdings; 127 concerned the physical reinstatement of claimants and the recognition of their right of possession. The commission issued decisions that restored land and houses to Turkish Muslim claimants and even demanded the relocation of Bulgarian Christians who had been settled on the premises vacated by fleeing Turkish Muslims. Relocation, by the way, was a measure that the PRA had neither dared nor wanted to take. Based on research in the contemporary press, Todorov argues that the special commissions in the other prefectures of the province acted in very similar ways. Despite the decisions of the commission, Bulgarian Christian villagers openly rebelled against its orders and physically resisted administrative officials charged with the execution of the orders.⁶⁷ This, along with the short tenure of the commission, would explain why Turkish Muslim *çiftlik* holders went to court or directly appealed to the imperial government in Istanbul.⁶⁸ Both strategies, as we saw, had limited consequences since

⁶⁷ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 169–76.

⁶⁸ See BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 3/2 s. 5, 6; A. MTZ. RŞ 9/1, s. 37, 68, 70, 76, 77; A. MTZ. RŞ 131/5 s. 71–74, 124, 125, 126; A. MTZ. RŞ 6/3, s. 17–19, 46, 58–60, 70, 75–78, 81, 94–96, 98–103, 114, 116–18.

the Eastern Rumelian administration and Bulgarian Christians aimed to dismantle Turkish Muslim *çiftliks* as well as to undermine the prewar wealth and status of Turkish Muslim landlords. In short, prewar conflicts between landholders and cultivators were exacerbated during repatriation, growing into ethno-religious tensions, because Eastern Rumelian authorities linked provincial autonomy to wresting the economic and political power of Turkish Muslim *çiftlik* holders.

PIOUS-CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS (*VAKIFS*) AND THE POLITICS OF LAND OWNERSHIP

Changes in land tenure advanced a conception of land ownership that oscillated between the individual and the communal, thereby binding Turkish Muslim claims to land and revenue with the assertion of Ottoman sovereignty. This is evident in the way Eastern Rumelian central and local branches of the administration dealt with ownership issues concerning the pious-charitable endowments, the *vakıfs*. Their gradual transformation from socioeconomic enterprises that also served public needs to Turkish Muslim communal property that was barely profitable undermined the ethno-religious power sharing scheme upon which provincial subjecthood was conceived by the Great Powers.

By the terms of the provincial Organic Statute, agricultural lands that had been included in *vakıfs* prior to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 would be transformed into private property. The implications of this measure were far reaching. Bulgarian Christian peasants who had made a living from tenant or sharecropping arrangements on *vakıf* lands could become individual proprietors. Implementing this ostensibly simple provision of the Statute confused officials not versed in the Ottoman laws while pressuring those who were, to adopt hybrid and contradictory measures. As provincial authorities dealt with property questions on *vakıf* lands, they gradually developed a category of “Ottoman Muslim lands” that encompassed a bundle of ownership claims made by individual Turkish Muslims or groups of family members or relatives. The authorities most often dealt with the ownership claims of individual Turkish Muslims as a communal problem. In so doing, the provincial administration defined Turkish Muslims as an ethno-religious group holding the capital of the imperial past. Significantly, Turkish Muslims also approached their personal troubles as a Turkish Muslim communal experience. In short, by attempting to control the wealth of *vakıfs*, the Filibe administration in practice weak-

ened the capacity of Turkish Muslims to attain socio-political influence within the provincial political structure. That is why *vakıfs* provide an important lens through which we can view the development of provincial subjecthood.

At the beginning of 1880,⁶⁹ that is, fairly soon after Governor Aleko Bogoridi had assumed his post, a special *vakıf* commission was formed under the purview of the Department⁷⁰ of Finance. The archival documents I have seen mention that the committee's files were housed in the Department of Finance though I have not discovered the founding protocol of this commission, if there was indeed one. In its correspondence with the Department of Justice, the office of the governor, and the prefectures, the Department of Finance specifically mentioned the existence of such a commission and referred cases to it. We know that its vice-chairman was G. Gruev but it is not clear who the other members were.⁷¹ Suggestions and decisions were signed by the governor in a few cases but it was most often Mr. Geshov, the Director of Finance, who pronounced himself (perhaps in consultation with others) on *vakıf* cases and signed authorizations for monetary compensation. The Department of Justice seems to have aided in collecting and verifying necessary documents. It also received the claims and grievances of Turkish Muslims and then forwarded them to the *vakıf* commission. Quite likely it acted as an advisory body composed of Bulgarian Christian men who were familiar with the Ottoman laws and/or had served as officials in the imperial bureaucracy before the war. Reading through the archival material one is left with the impression that the commission was expected to offer nonantagonistic ways of adapting Ottoman laws that regulated *vakıfs* to Eastern Rumelian realities while simultaneously upholding the ascendancy of provincial laws and institutions. By 1885 the administration had begun treating *vakıfs* as Turkish Muslim communal property subject to provincial regulation, rather than as the accumulation of properties that also served broader public needs.

Let me briefly outline now the role of pious-charitable endowments in the Ottoman Empire as well as changes in their management, especially during the Tanzimat. The Eastern Rumelian administration inherited these changes, including the ever-expanding governmental supervision of

⁶⁹ The earliest dated document I have is from Feb. 7/19, 1880.

⁷⁰ I translate the Bulgarian “дирекция” and the Ottoman Turkish “müdürlük/مدرك” as “department” because “ministry” would imply full sovereignty in that historical context.

⁷¹ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 38, l. 8, 149.

vakıfs, a role that enabled the provincial administration to treat Turkish Muslims as an imperial vestige that hindered Eastern Rumelia's autonomy.

Vakıfs fulfilled one of the basic religious obligations incumbent upon Muslims, namely to perform charitable deeds. In the Ottoman Empire, the sultan and his family, the ruling military and bureaucratic elite, wealthy merchants and landholders as well as men and women of more modest means established *vakıfs* by dedicating their immovable and/or movable properties to pious and charitable goals outlined in the founding charter.⁷² Revenues generated from *vakıfs* (such as rent from buildings or agricultural produce) were commonly used for the construction and/or upkeep of mosques, schools and their staffs, public water fountains, wells, soup kitchens, hospices, *hamams*, bridges, resting stops for merchants and other travelers, caravanserais, etc. Overall, *vakıfs* supported Muslim religious and cultural practices in the Ottoman Empire while also providing essential public services to all subjects.⁷³ *Vakıfs* functioned as economic enterprises as well, since the profits from real estate and agriculture funded the very pious-charitable works for which the endowments are known.⁷⁴ Turning movable or immovable property into *vakıfs* also served personal and family socioeconomic goals. High-ranking state officials who had accumulated wealth often used it to establish *vakıfs* so that, if or when they fell from grace, their properties would be safe from confiscation by the sultan.⁷⁵

Equally important, one-tenth of *vakıf* profits (after the payment of the required taxes) usually supported the *mütevelli* (administrator or trustee) of the *vakıf*. This could be the founder who initially set the line of appoint-

⁷² See R. Peters et al., "Wakf," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, 2nd ed. (Brill Online, 2014), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/wakf-COM_1333.

⁷³ See Randi Deguilhem "Wakf: IV. In the Ottoman Empire to 1914," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, 2nd ed. (Brill Online, 2014), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/wakf-COM_1333; Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁷⁴ Svetlana Ivanova, "Introduction," in *Inventory of Ottoman Turkish Documents about Waqf Preserved in the Oriental Department at the St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library, Part I—Registers*, ed. Evgeni Radushev, Svetlana Ivanova, and Rumen Kovachev (Sofia: IMIR, 2003), 13.

⁷⁵ Vera Mutafchieva, *Osmanska Sotsialno-ikonomicheska Istoriia (Izsledvaniia)* (Sofia: BAN, 1993), 115–16.

ments to the *tevliyet* (the office of the *mütevelli*) in the establishing charter (*vakfiye/vakıfname*). Very often the founder and his (or occasionally her) descendants became the *mütevelli*, thus making the *vakıf* one with an inherited *tevliyet*. The remuneration received from the *tevliyet* could grow if and when new properties were added or several consolidated. Alternatively, if and when the kin line died out or the *tevliyet* funds were depleted, the local judge (*kadi*) would take charge of appointing a trustee to manage the endowment.⁷⁶

The large number of *vakıfs* created by the sultanic and ruling elites were spread throughout the empire and were supervised by state functionaries of the Evkaf Ministry while their finances were controlled by the treasury. During the reign of Mustafa II (1695–1703) the revenues from these large *vakıfs* started being farmed out (*malikane*) as revenues from *miri* (state) lands were; so tax farming found its way into *vakıfs* as well. In this situation there was legal mixing between *miri* and *vakıf* lands. *Vakıfs* also combined layers of ownership, since *vakıf* lands could be leased and then peasants entered into contracts with leaseholders to cultivate agricultural lands inside *vakıfs*. Such contracts allowed peasants to inherit the usufruct right just like they did on *miri* lands.⁷⁷

In the course of the nineteenth century, the imperial bureaucracy gradually extended its supervisory functions to all *vakıfs* to varying degrees. The establishment of the Evkaf Ministry in 1826 and subsequently the central bureau for *vakıf* management limited the autonomy of *vakıfs* that were established by sultans and the ruling elite. This was so because the ministry began farming out *vakıf* revenues to pay for military expenses and other reforms. Over time the powers of the *mütevelli* began eroding.⁷⁸ Between 1839 and 1842 the Porte subjected sultanic *vakıfs* and those of the ruling elite whose *mütevelli* line had died out as well as newly constituted *vakıfs* to the authority of town judges and town councils (*meclis*). *Vakıf* revenues were sent to the Evkaf Ministry and placed in a special state treasury. This local management ended in 1845. From then on, officially appointed administrators (*müdürs*) oversaw *vakıfs*. The duties of these administrators received further elaboration in the Vakıf Law of 1863, which expanded the role of the Ottoman government in

⁷⁶ John Robert Barnes, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 102–3.

⁷⁷ Ivanova, “Introduction,” 15, 21, 25–26, 324.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 16, 22.

monitoring endowments.⁷⁹ In practice, this change meant, for example, that trustees of *vakıfs* with inherited *tevlîyet* were now under the authority of a state official who was in charge of collecting revenues. *Müstesna vakıfs*, which were founded by *ğazîs* (Muslim warriors) in the course of Ottoman expansion, were the only ones that remained outside the purview of the Evkaf Ministry.

The Eastern Rumelian administration employed the Ottoman bureaucratic overreach as a way to assert provincial autonomy. This is the reason Director of Internal Affairs Gavril Krüstevich dismissed the claim of the trustee of the *vakıf* “Karlzade Lala Ali Bey” (Filibe prefecture, town of Karlovo and its hinterland) for one-tenth of the tithe and rent on city properties.⁸⁰ Krüstevich explained to the prefect of Plovdiv/Filibe, G. P. Dimitrov, that,

The rights that he [the *mütevelli*] claims were established before the Tanzimat and later they were granted to the municipalities [*belediye*] by the Ottoman government. And if this were not the case, the Organic Statute grants such rights to the city councils [*gradski süveti*] and only they can collect them [revenues from the *vakıfs*] according to a special law or the normative act [*publichno-administrativen pravilnik*] of 2 April 1881 which is already in effect. Consequently, the claimant has no right to demand for himself [revenue] because the new laws override the old ones.⁸¹

Krüstevich’s position was part of a lengthy correspondence initiated in December 1880 when Mehmed Raşid wrote to the Department of Justice explaining that he was the *mütevelli* and even had an imperial document (*ba berat-i ali*) to prove it, which was reissued in 1844, that is, during the Tanzimat period.⁸² Citing the terms of the *vakıf*’s founding charter, he requested a portion of the tithe for the year 1878 already collected by the Department of Finance from the agricultural lands that were part of the endowment as well as a portion of the taxes paid on the endowment’s urban properties. This revenue funded both his salary and the upkeep of

⁷⁹ Ibid., 23; Bahaeddin Yediyıldız and Nazıf Öztürk, “Tanzimat Dönemi Vakıf Uygulamaları,” in *150. Yılında Tanzimat*, ed. Hakkı Dursun Yıldız (Ankara: TTK, 1992), 574.

⁸⁰ The translated founding charter is in TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 40, l. 71–73 g.

⁸¹ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 40, l. 5, 5a.

⁸² Ibid., l. 1.

the religious institutions for the benefit of the Muslim community. His petition was forwarded to the *vakıf* commission. Fourteen months later (February 1882) Gavril Krüstevich argued that Mehmed Raşid's request should not be honored.⁸³ Having looked into the matter closely in a private council (presumably with other officials), Krüstevich asserted once again that the demands of the trustee were ultimately incompatible with provincial laws. He stressed that any demand for a portion of taxes paid to the city interfered directly with municipal authority. Ultimately, he used the example of the interventionist Tanzimat government to emphasize Eastern Rumelia's right to subordinate *vakıfs* to the provincial administration thereby also emphasizing to former Ottoman Muslim subjects its authority over them.

But other members of the provincial administration were more accommodating than Krüstevich, partly honoring the *vakıf* charter and Ottoman practice, though ultimately making the *mütevelli* beholden to the unpredictable decisions of central and local officials. On 6 March 1882 Mehmed Raşid reiterated his request to the Department of Finance, stressing his financial needs and duties as a trustee. This time things changed. Director of Finance Ivan Ev. Geshov wrote on the petition ordering the accountants to calculate Mehmed Raşid's due. Two days later the portion of the tithe claimed by him for 1879, 1880, and 1881 was calculated to be 10,354.40 *kurush*. Geshov ordered 7,000 *kurush* to be paid and a check was issued for this amount. In June 1882 he informed Governor Bogoridi that Mehmed Raşid asked for an advanced payment on portion of the land tax. It was Krüstevich who reviewed the matter during the following month by once again convening a private council, but this time he ruled that it was up to Finance Minister Geshov to make a decision.⁸⁴ Geshov explained that the Department of Finance could not provide funds until the land tax began to be collected in April 1883. By August 1,000 *kurush* was paid to the trustee,⁸⁵ which of course was much less than what he had collected for previous years. This was a difficult year for provincial finances as officials were hard pressed to collect the—at that point—burdensome land tax. In August 1885 the new director of finance ordered 2,000 *kurush* to be paid to the new *mütevelli*, Süleyman Efendi, but there is no specific mention that a check was issued. The requested portion of the municipal taxes was not given to him at all.

⁸³ Ibid., I, 5, 5 g., 6, 6 g., 7, 72.

⁸⁴ Ibid., I, 8, 14, 15.

⁸⁵ Ibid., I, 21.

It is not clear what exactly transpired between the offices of Krüstevich and Geshov that moved the Department of Finance to issue checks to the *mütevelli*, thus complying at least partially with his request. We know from Geshov's correspondence with the prefect of Filibe in July 1883 that the trustee had petitioned the grand vizier for help in securing one-tenth of the revenues from the tithe and municipal taxes collected from the *vakıf*.⁸⁶ Geshov asked the prefect's advice in deciding whether this request should be honored. We also know from an undated letter by Governor Bogoridi to the director of justice that the Ottoman representative in Eastern Rumelia, Ali Haydar Efendi, wrote directly to the governor on several occasions about another *vakıf*.⁸⁷ Bogoridi was extremely irritated at this behavior, explaining to the director that Ali Haydar Efendi was not officially sanctioned to communicate directly with the governor. Bogoridi then explicitly asked the director of justice to inform Ali Haydar Efendi that he would no longer respond to any letters.⁸⁸ It is likely then that the Porte put pressure on Geshov, leading him to make a compromise: he paid less than requested from the tithe while ignoring the demand for a portion of the municipal taxes. As we will see in the next chapter, 1883 was also a year of considerable diplomatic tensions between Filibe and Istanbul because agriculturally productive Turkish Muslims from Eastern Rumelia were immigrating to the Ottoman Empire. Accommodating the demands of the *mütevelli* of the "Karlizade Lala Ali Bey" endowment fit well with the statements of Governor Bogoridi that the provincial administration was doing all in its power to normalize life in Eastern Rumelia and to secure the lives of Muslims.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid., l. 28.

⁸⁷ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 38, l. 12, 12 g.

⁸⁸ Three years earlier the Ottoman government had pressured the envoy of the Principality of Bulgaria in Istanbul, D. Tsankov, to reiterate to Sofia the need for a special Ottoman-Bulgarian commission on *vakıf* and *miri* lands in the Principality. The Porte informed the British ambassador that it intended to send an emissary to Sofia who would begin dealing with the issue even though there was no formal agreement with the Bulgarians on creating such a joint commission. Minister for Foreign and Confessional Affairs G. D. Nachovich was quite annoyed, chastised Tsankov for not being firmer with the Porte, and viewed these diplomatic exchanges as Ottoman disregard for the limited Bulgarian independence as well as an example of London's efforts to direct British public opinion away from Britain's colonial ambitions in Afghanistan. See TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 10, l. 3–5.

⁸⁹ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 4/3, s. 97.

Short of restoring the prewar order, *mütevelli*s may have considered normalization of life to mean that they would become officials in the provincial bureaucracy who had predictable and regular funds to support Muslim piety and culture. As we will see below, they were also concerned that the impoverishment of *vakıfs* was crippling not only to them but also to Muslim life in Eastern Rumelia. This was hardly a concern of the provincial administration that regarded the endowments as a bulwark of the Ottoman Empire. From the late fourteenth through the early sixteenth centuries, *vakıfs* helped root the power of the expanding House of Osman as well as its religion of Islam in the Balkans. Newly established *vakıf* complexes were crucial for the Islamicization of public urban space as well as for the economic revival of cities.⁹⁰ Hence, Eastern Rumelia's leaders were not interested in supporting the "Karlızade Lala Ali Bey" *vakıf* complex for it had served as a pillar of Ottoman authority and Islam before the war. So provincial authorities were reluctant to embrace fully the interventionist role of the Tanzimat government that had turned trustees into state officials.

Nonetheless, like the Ottoman government that had farmed out *vakıfs* for the benefit of the Imperial Treasury,⁹¹ the provincial administration wished to control the finances of the endowments. Like its imperial predecessors, the provincial authorities deemed *mütevelli*s worthy of payment from the *tevliyet* fund only if they maintained well the properties that served the charitable and religious needs of the Muslim population.⁹² Yet, in Eastern Rumelia, there was no official commitment to provide funds so that the *vakıfs* could operate when revenues from endowment properties were not available or scarce. At the same time, the Eastern Rumelian administration was obliged by the Organic Statute to preserve the rights of the religious communities that existed before the war and allow those

⁹⁰ On the spread of Islam in the Balkans, see Antonina Zheliazkova, *Razprostranenie na Islama v Zapadnobalkanskite zemi pod Osmanska Vlast XV–XVIII v.* (Sofia: BAN, 1990) and "Formirane na Miusiulmanskite Obshtnosti i Kompleksite na Balkanskite Istoriografii," in *Miusiulmanskite Obshtnosti na Balkanite i v Bŭlgariia: Istoricheski Eskizi*, ed. Antonina Zheliazkova, Bozhidar Aleksiev, and Zhorzheta Nazŭrska (Sofia: IMIR, 1997), 11–56. On the role of endowments in Balkan cities see, Vera Mutafchieva, "Za Roliata na Vakŭfa v Gradskata Ikonomika na Balkanite pod Turska Vlast (XV–XVII v.)," in *Osmanska-sotsialno Ikonomicheska Istoria (Izsledvaniia)* (Sofia: BAN, 1993), 378–98.

⁹¹ Barnes, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations*, 106–11, 127.

⁹² See the opinion of the finance director, Ivan Ev. Geshov, on the *mütevelli* of the "Rika Sinan Bey" *vakıf*, TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 38, l. 43.

communities to keep their properties. No movable or immobile property could be alienated unless it was for the service of the common public good.⁹³ In practice, as we will see shortly, provincial officials helped starve *vakıfs* financially, thus undermining any broader public function they may have had before the war.

In October 1881, the Department of the Interior declined the request by the Muslim community in the town of Zâgra-i Cedîd for tithe revenue from the agricultural lands included in the *vakıfs* of “Saruca Pasha” and “Umur Beğ.” The Muslim community needed money to pay the *imam* and the *khatib* of the mosques in the *vakıfs*. The department stressed that municipalities, not private individuals or groups, collected taxes because tax collection was now exclusively a public matter and not a private business enterprise. By the beginning of the following year, however, the Department of Finance had made payments to the *mütevelli* covering 1878, 1880, and 1881 for a total of 1,333.70 *kurush*.⁹⁴ As the tithe was replaced with the land tax, some was forgiven due to the destruction of much of the harvest by hail in 1884 but it is not clear if any portion of the land tax collected from the *vakıfs* for the 1883/84 and 1884/85 fiscal years reached the trustee. In May 1885 the Muslim community in Zâgra-i Cedîd testified that the *mütevelli* of the “Saruca Pasha” *vakıf* was fulfilling his duties, but it is not clear whether this statement was made so that he would be paid or simply as demonstration that he was not short of funds.⁹⁵ Quite likely it was the former because by the end of 1885 (when Eastern Rumelia was taken over by the Principality of Bulgaria) *vakıfs* usually lacked sufficient funds. This is the reason *vakıfs* were parceled and sold or designated exclusively for agricultural purposes.

Thus endowment lands were put into free market circulation. For example, in January, February, and March 1883, after looking at surviving Ottoman documentation and the testimony of the mayor’s office in Karlovo, the district court recognized several Turkish Muslims as individual owners of pastures that were part of the “Karlızade Lala Ali Bey” *vakıf*. The court recognized Süleyman Efendi Mustafov as the owner of pastures totaling 10,000 *uvrats* by issuing him the Eastern Rumelian titled deed, the *vladalo*, to replace his lost (during the war) *tapu*. The estimated value

⁹³ See articles 335 and 341 of the Organic Statute. I have relied here on the French text in Turkey no. 6 (1879), “Correspondence Relative to the Organic Statute for Eastern Roumelia,” *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*.

⁹⁴ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 39, l. 14, 14 g., 24.

⁹⁵ Ibid., l. 36, 38, 39, 45, 46.

of the pastures was 40,000 gold *kurush*. In another case, upon the death of Raşid Süleymanov, his wife, Ayşe Hacı Mehmed Alieva, and his sister, Fatma Kacicik Süleymanova, inherited his pasture of 10,000 *uvrats*. In January 1883, the court issued title deeds to each one of them. In March, the two women sold the pasture to the Karlovo residents and brothers Khristo and Dimitür Lazarovi for 70,000 *kurush*.⁹⁶ The court acted in the spirit of Article 486, Paragraph 1, of the Organic Statute, which charged the governor and the provincial assembly with writing up a bill to lay out the procedures whereby lands and other immovable properties that were part of *vakıfs* or other non-Muslim endowments would become “free immovable property in possession of its current legal holders or those who have the right in their lieu.”⁹⁷ These sale transactions not only contributed to the dismantling of *vakıfs* but also transferred agricultural lands to Bulgarian Christians.

Yet the transformation of *vakıf* properties into individual private property was much more tense, complicated, and ultimately partial than the cases described above would lead us to believe. Procedures were developed on ad hoc basis as the *vakıf* commission dealt with the claims of the *mütevellıs*, with disputes among relatives when the *tevliyet* was inherited, as well as with cases in which the founder’s offspring was a primary beneficiary of the *vakıf* and wished to sell property. The *tevliyet* of the “İsmail Bey” endowment is a good example of how the financial management of *vakıfs* became more standardized thereby weakening the ownership claims of a founder’s offspring in Eastern Rumelia. This process paved the way for the conceptualization of *vakıfs* as Turkish Muslim communal property at risk of appropriation in a polity claimed by Bulgarian Christians.

The transformation of *vakıfs* into insecure communal property exemplified the gradual social marginalization of Muslims. A case in point is the dispute over the *tevliyet* of the “İsmail Bey” endowment. Relatives owned shares (*hissedar*) of the *tevliyet*. It was maintained with revenues from two sources: first, a portion of the tithe from the villages of Markovo, Izvor, and Yeni in the Filibe prefecture; and second, rent from sixty-four *dükkan*s (shops) in the city of Filibe. In addition to supporting the offspring of the founder, the *vakıf* was intended to serve

⁹⁶ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 40, l. 88, 88 g., 89, 89 g., 93, 93 g., 94, 94 g., 95.

⁹⁷ “Organicheski Ustav na Iztochna Rumeliia,” in *Zakonodatelstvoto v Tsartstvo Bŭlgariia (1879–1944): konstitutsiia, zakoni, motivi, dokladi, ukazi, naredbi, naredbi-zakoni*, ed. Evgeni Iochev (Sofia: Fondatsiia “Otvoreno Obshtestvo,” [1999]), 48.

both the Muslim population of Markovo with a mosque and a *hamam* as well as the population of Filibe with a small mosque and a school for teachers.⁹⁸ “İsmail Bey” was an old *vakıf* dating back to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century when Sultan Mehmed II (1444–1446; 1451–1481) rewarded the loyal Turkic Muslim Anatolian dynasty of the Isfendiyyaroğulları (known also as the Candaroğulları) with *mülks* (freehold property) in the environs of Filibe and Dimetoka (present-day Greece). The Isfendiyyaroğulları subsequently turned the properties into *vakıfs*. İsmail Bey, a descendant of İsfendiyyar Bey ibn Mustafa Bey, received a *mülk* in Markovo from Mehmed II (and was issued the appropriated document called *temlikname*) which he transformed into inherited *vakıf*.⁹⁹ By the time Eastern Rumelia was established, the “İsmail Bey” endowment had already been subordinated to the imperial Evkaf Ministry. The *vakıf*’s finances came under the supervision of Ahmed Nuri Bey, who was the official in charge of all the endowments in the district of Filibe.¹⁰⁰ The brothers Hacı İsmail Bey and Ahmed Bey were the living descendants who claimed their due share of the revenue, as stipulated in the *vakıfname*, while the trustee of the endowment, who was an imperial official, claimed his due as well.¹⁰¹ Their interests clashed, prompting each side to seek provincial intervention.

The descendent Hacı İsmail Bey served as trustee between 1879 and 1880, collecting funds and then, according to his brother Ahmed Bey, not distributing them properly. Hacı İsmail Bey insisted that nothing was done out of ill will. He neglected his duties because he had been very busy. Subsequently, he explained that the little he had at his disposal was used to maintain the endowment itself, bemoaning his inability to collect any portion of the rent on the agricultural properties and the shops. Nonetheless, Ahmed Bey appealed several times to the Departments of Finance and Justice. Finally, the *vakıf* commission recognized his rights. By September 1880 Ahmed Bey had passed away and his sons renewed the claim for a share of the *tevliyet*, which was promptly forwarded to the *vakıf* commission.¹⁰² Meanwhile, the *mütevelli* Hacı İsmail Bey asked the Department of Justice to help Ahmet Bey’s family.¹⁰³ At the beginning of 1881 he began

⁹⁸ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 38, l. 4, 6.

⁹⁹ *Inventory*, 228, 229; TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 38, l. 6.

¹⁰⁰ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 38, l. 6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, l. 4, 6.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, l. 1, 2, 4, 7, 7 g., 8, 8 g., 16, 21 g., 140 g., 146.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, l. 27.

requesting from the provincial administration compensation for the sale of *vakıf* properties and presumably for the endowment's upkeep; in the summer he again reiterated his demand for a portion of the tithe. The circumstances surrounding the sale of *vakıf* lands remain obscure. The problem was that the Department of Finance did not want to take any action until Hacı İsmail Bey and his nephews, Ali Rıza Bey and Mesud Efendi, settled their conflict over each other's shares in the *tevlîyet*. Eventually, Hacı İsmail Bey received some unspecified sum that—according to Governor Bogoridi—was not contested.¹⁰⁴

By the spring of 1882 Hacı İsmail Bey had passed away and his heirs stated their claims to the revenue both with the administration and the Muslim canonical court in Filibe. Significantly, this time, at the beginning of 1883, the Department of Finance consulted with the Turkish Muslim community (presumably of the three villages and Filibe) to determine how much of the remaining tithe for 1881 should be given to the heirs, assuming that with the *mütevelli*'s death the duty of fulfilling the endowment's charitable and pious goals passed onto the Turkish Muslim population. Upon the recommendation of the Turkish Muslim community, a check was issued for 17,799.67 *kurush* (out of 28,479.50 *kurush*), although it is not clear who was in charge of distributing the money among the heirs. Presumably the remaining money was to be used for the religious institutions of the endowment and their staffs, though nothing was stated explicitly. We see here that the authorities expected that the Turkish Muslim population of a provincial administrative unit would take responsibility as a community for *vakıf* properties. The decision of the Finance Department also sent a clear message that in *vakıf* matters Filibe enjoyed autonomy from Istanbul. This is underscored by the brief and curious exchange between the Department of Finance, the governor, and the Bulgarian Christian villagers of Markovo and Izvor. In this exchange the villagers asked the administration to compel the *vakıf* management to restore the villages' churches that existed on the *vakıf* grounds. The governor declined, citing the terms of the endowment charter that lacked such provisions.¹⁰⁵ It seems odd that the villagers would expect funds from this Muslim endowment to be used for church repairs. Quite likely the peasants' petition simply tested the waters to see whether the changed political situation would benefit them.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., I. 26, 51, 150, 150 g., 155, 156.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., I. 54, 58, 61, 62, 65, 65 g., 69, 69 g.

Even if the Christian villagers had their way, there probably would not have been money for church repairs. By the end of Eastern Rumelia's existence, the *tevliyet* funds were quite modest as the *mütevelli* who succeeded Hacı İsmail Bey in 1884 realized. An important reason was the fact that the amount of the land taxes collected since 1883 onward progressively declined. But even before the land tax replaced the tithe, payments were routinely delayed, were smaller than needed, or remained unfulfilled. The problem with the tithe was that various crops, vegetables, and fruits had to be sold first, then the councils of elders, which calculated the tithe, had to be compensated, and only then could the funds reach trustees (though not necessarily all the service staff, like *imams*, *khatibs*, teachers, etc.).¹⁰⁶

It is this financial weakness that began transforming *vakıfs* from socio-economic organizations serving the religious needs of Muslims and fulfilling broader public needs to the insecure property of Turkish Muslims as an ethno-religious community in Eastern Rumelia (and subsequently in Bulgaria). This process unfolded as the Ottoman representative to Eastern Rumelia, Ali Haydar Efendi, was working with Turkish Muslims to set up councils that would deal specifically with managing *vakıfs* and taking care of orphans. His efforts bore fruit in Filibe, İslimiye, and Tatar Pazarcık.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the most respected Turkish Muslims under the leadership of the *müftü*¹⁰⁸ of Filibe helped select the chief *müftü* of the province who oversaw all other Muslim religious, judicial, and educational officials, including those employed in *vakıfs*. The selected chief *müftü* became both an Eastern Rumelian and an Ottoman official. He was paid by the Ottoman Evkaf Ministry. His candidacy also needed to be approved by the provincial governor, the Sheykh ul-Islam in Istanbul and the Porte. For most of Eastern Rumelia's existence the chief *müftü* was Abdürrahim Efendi, whose dismissal in June 1885 was preceded by years of Turkish Muslim complaints and allegations that he misappropriated and sold *vakıf* properties.¹⁰⁹

The provincial Office of the Chief *Müftü* exemplifies more broadly the precarious position of Turkish Muslims in Eastern Rumelia, dependent, as they were, on two rival centers of political authority: Istanbul and Filibe. The weakening of the *vakıf* as an institution reflected how untenable in practice the idea of an ethno-religious balance was becoming. To function,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., l. 70, 80, 80 g., 86, 158, 158 g. and f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 39, l. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Mahir Aydın, *Şarkı Rumeli Vilâyeti* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992), 205.

¹⁰⁸ An official expounder of Muslim law.

¹⁰⁹ Aydın, *Şarkı Rumeli Vilâyeti*, 206–8.

vakıfs needed provincial tax revenue. If the Eastern Rumelian authorities recognized this as a legal right, then they undermined the financial autonomy of the province and by implication Bulgarian claims to self-rule, as Krüstevich realized. On the other hand, Eastern Rumelia was after all still an Ottoman province, despite its broad administrative autonomy, hence dependent on the will of the sultan and his government. Thus, Geshov took palliative measures like partial payments to *vakıf* trustees both to please the Porte as well as to demonstrate to trustees their dependence on provincial authorities.

CHAPTER THREE

An Experiment in Pluralistic Governance: Emigration and the Emergence of National Politics

H Having barely settled in Eastern Rumelia, Turkish Muslims started emigrating from the province in mid-1882. The failures of repatriation, worsened by the replacement of the tithe with a land tax caused an emigration wave particularly from mid-1882 through 1883. Coupled with administrative changes and assembly elections, this peacetime emigration further changed the demography of the province thereby undermining its pluralistic political model. It rested—as the Great Powers had mandated—on a liberal political process in which ethno-religious groups had to share power. At the same time, each of the three main ethno-religious groups—Bulgarian Christians, Turkish Muslims, and Greek Christians—appealed to one or another Great Power for support. Relations among the Great Powers were defined by imperial rivalries that left an imprint on how Bulgarian Christians and Turkish Muslims regarded their places in the province. Russia and Austria-Hungary competed for influence in the Balkans. Great Britain and Russia fought for control over Central Asia. All three had commercial and strategic interests in the Ottoman eastern Mediterranean. And most European empires fought to dominate Africa. Consequently, as I suggest here, in “the age of empire,”¹ the interplay among migration, land tenure changes, and the liberal political process engendered “corporatist” subjecthood that ultimately ensured Bulgarian

¹ Eric Hobsbawm’s term referring to imperialism from the second half of the nineteenth century until World War I, *Age of Empire*.

hegemony in Eastern Rumelia and led to its annexation by the Principality of Bulgaria.

Meanwhile, Turkish Muslim refugee repatriation became a major source of conflict between the imperial government in Istanbul and the provincial administration in Filibe. Eager to limit Eastern Rumelian autonomy, the Sublime Porte used the failures of repatriation to insist that the provincial administration was not civilized and thus not fit to govern over Muslims and Christians alike. Striving to obtain political, not merely administrative autonomy, Eastern Rumelian officials used the intercessions of the Porte on behalf of Turkish Muslims to prove imperial ill will that undermined the nascent provincial society. In short, repatriation, migration, and Bulgarian Christian aspirations for political independence from Istanbul became entwined thereby forging Turkish Muslim subjecthood at the interface between rival Ottoman and Bulgarian bids for sovereignty.

PROVINCIAL AUTHORITY AND REPATRIATION

When Governor Aleko Bogoridi confronted Ottoman accusations that he was not ensuring orderly and just Muslim resettlement in Eastern Rumelia, he insisted that, “[T]he administration has taken in every case the precautionary measures listed in the vizieral² note to protect the life, property, and land of the Muslim people and even to secure their freedom from anxiety.”³ He concluded this upon a tour of the province. Similar remarks about the generally low level of animosity between Muslims and Christians, despite the recent war, were made by Benjamin von Kallay (Austria-Hungary’s representative to the European Commission) upon his tour of Eastern Rumelia.⁴ Meanwhile, Director of the Interior Gavril Krüstevich pleaded with the Porte not to send refugees back to Eastern Rumelia without food that would be sufficient for at least six months.⁵ In fall 1879, the Eastern Rumelian legislative assembly voted on the distribution of 40,000 *lira* for the settling of refugees. The administration gave monetary

² That is, sent from the Office of the Ottoman Grand Vizier.

³ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 4/3, s. 97.

⁴ Turkey no. 19 (1880), no. 51 (Sir Elliot to Earl Granville, Vienna, 5 June 1880), *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*.

⁵ Zhorzheta Nazürska, “Maltsinstveno-religioznata Politika v Iztochna Rumeliia (1879–1885),” in *Miusiulmanskite Obshtnosti na Balkanite i v Bülğariia: Istorcheski Eskizi* (Sofia: IMIR, 1997), 126.

help to what it considered to be the poorest returning Muslim refugees and attempted to satisfy the debts of Bulgarian Christians villagers to the former.⁶ Director Krüstevich also joined forces with the Bulgarian Exarch Iosif and foreign consuls who, upon British suggestion, set up a charity to provide refugees with food, clothing, and firewood. Moreover, the Prefect of Bergös was given funds to transport and settle Turkish Muslims on abandoned lands. In the city of Zăgra-i Atik a joint Bulgarian–Turkish commission distributed land and compensation following the development of a new urban plan. The committee was created under the authority of the Directorate of the Interior due to pressures from the European Commission. It had received complaints from Turkish Muslims that the Bulgarian-dominated municipality appraised their properties very low, began street construction, and refused to provide compensation. In addition, three prefects were fired for not taking care of the refugees.⁷

But Bogoridi was in a tight spot having to prove that relations between Muslims and Christians were normalizing. Just as Kallay noted the diminishing antagonism between Muslims and Christians, the British ambassador to Istanbul, Sir Henry A. Layard, wrote that Muslims from Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria sent petitions to British consuls about abuses by Bulgarian Christians.⁸ Todor Ikonov, the Bulgarian Christian prefect of İslimiye, was aware of such reports sent to the consul in the Black Sea city of Bergös but dismissed them as British antagonism to Bulgarian rule.⁹ Yet the Foreign Office was also eager not to let Muslim grievances be a source of conflict between Britain and Russia.¹⁰ In his memoirs, Ikonov condemned the violence committed by the Ottoman soldiers during the war as well as the abuses of the Bulgarian-dominated gendarmerie in Eastern Rumelia.¹¹ Indeed, ethno-religious violence was a feature of public life during the first couple of years of provincial existence. In February, April, and May 1880, the gendarmerie put down

⁶ BOA, Y. A. HUS 163/26 s. 2; Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 129, 163, 176.

⁷ Nazırska, “Maltsinstveno-religioznata,” 125–27.

⁸ Sinan Kunalalp, ed., *The Queen’s Ambassador to the Sultan: Memoirs of Sir Henry A. Layard’s Constantinople Embassy, 1877–1880* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009), 658–59.

⁹ Todor Ikonov, *Memoari*, ed. Toncho Zhechev (Sofia: Bulgarski Pisatel, 1973), 177, 225–31.

¹⁰ Turkey no. 19 (1880), no. 131, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*.

¹¹ Ikonov, *Memoari*, 225–31. On the composition of the gendarmerie and the difficulty to recruit Muslims, Jews, and non-Bulgarian Christians, see Nazırska, “Maltsinstveno-religioznata.”

protests that had erupted around the southern Black Sea coast as well as in the primarily Muslim district of Kırcaali/Kürdzhalı following the recently promulgated law for Eastern Rumelia's administrative division.¹² In the Kırcaali district, and more broadly in the Rhodope Mountain, the Muslim (Turkish- and Slavic-speaking/Pomak) villages had also refused to comply with the decision of the Treaty of Berlin, which included them in Eastern Rumelia. These villages, along with at least a dozen more villages in the Hasköy district, effectively resisted the imposition of provincial authority.¹³ A Special Kırcaali Commission was appointed to investigate the grievances of the rebels.¹⁴ The resulting report (June 1880) summarized the abuses and offered monetary assessment of the material damage experienced by the Kırcaali villages. It also accused about twenty-seven Christian men of committing crimes and recommended that they be tried. The commission did not legitimize the disobedience of the villages, asserting that the provincial administration had the legal right to suppress revolts against its authority. Until summer 1884, Director of the Interior Krüstevich worked with the governors of the adjacent Ottoman *vilayets* of Edirne and Selanik (Thessaloniki) as well as with British consuls to compel rebellious villages to accept provincial rule. Diplomatic means failed, and the administration sent the gendarmerie that took over five or six of the villages while the remaining successfully petitioned the governor of Selanik to become part of the *vilayet*. The Porte asserted that these villages had never been assigned to Eastern Rumelia.¹⁵

The challenges to Eastern Rumelian authority discussed above, made the province look weak and incompetent for failing to subdue the rebel-

¹² Zhorzheta Nazŭrska, "Administrativno-teritorialno Delenie i Pogranichni Problemi v Iztochna Rumeliia (1879–1885)," *Istoricheski Pregled*, no. 5 (1994–95): 74–93, here 79; Turkey no. 19 (1880), no. 63–69, *House of Commons Papers Online*.

¹³ Bernard Lory, "Ahmed Aga Tamraşlijata: The Last Derebey of the Rhodopes," in *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 179–203; Nazŭrska, "Administrativno-teritorialno," 87.

¹⁴ Turkey no. 10 (1880), "Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Occurrences in the Kirdjali District," *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*.

¹⁵ Nazŭrska, "Administrativno-teritorialno Delenie," 89–91. The border with the Principality of Bulgaria was full of problems as well. In 1880 Muslim villages claimed they were unaware of the new border that assigned them to the Principality, explicitly stating that they preferred either to be part of Eastern Rumelia or to have their own polity under the rule of the Muslim notable Choban Hasan. What followed was a bloody conflict in which the provincial administration won, albeit at the cost of human life and negative international publicity. See Nazŭrska, "Administrativno-teritorialno Delenie," 84.

lious villages. On the other hand, when the administration quelled challenges to its autonomy, international criticism followed, as did Muslims' distrust of the provincial authorities. As one English diplomat wrote, "it is the interest of the Bulgarian population to command the sympathy and approval of Europe" because "as a newly constituted province, it is all-important to them to show that they are capable of maintaining order, observing self-restraint, enforcing discipline, and respecting minorities."¹⁶

When Turkish Muslim landowners like Ahmed Ağa (whose case I discussed in the previous chapter) could not restore their prewar social status by deploying imperial documentation, they denounced the prevalence of injustice and tended to leave Eastern Rumelia altogether.¹⁷ Many ordinary villagers had no "paper" to support land claims; but even if they did, gone was the Ottoman social web that both validated documents and recognized ownership relations in the absence of written evidence. Thus, Mehmed Effendi, a refugee landholder from Filibe, concluded that while there had been justice before the war, now, when it came to Muslims (*ahali-i İslamiye*), courts did not practice justice anymore and ignored the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin for equality.¹⁸ Refugees' anguish reveals a painful political process: Ottoman documentation was being recontextualized and it was this process of interpretation within a new political paradigm that refugees recognized as unjust. The problem with the official documents was that while they had been authoritative within the socio-political context that produced them, now the ultimate authority of Ottoman documents in Eastern Rumelia was being determined not in Istanbul but in Filibe.

While decrying injustice, smallholders like Mehmet Effendi continued appealing both to Filibe and Istanbul for fairness and protection thereby involving the old imperial and new provincial capitals in a complex rivalry over who was better equipped to govern Muslims. The problem for the provincial administration was that even when they succeeded in land restitution, rural Muslims lived with intimidation by Bulgarian Christians, prompting many (by mid-1882) to emigrate.¹⁹ The demographic changes wrought by war and occupation had altered the ethno-religious composition and balance of neighborhoods and villages. This balance continued to tip to the disadvantage of Muslims due to the other major emigration

¹⁶ Turkey, no. 19 (1880), no. 69, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*.

¹⁷ Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*, 169–71.

¹⁸ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 1/37 s. 1.

¹⁹ Nedim İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk Göçleri (1877–1890)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), 130–36.

trigger after the departure of the Russians: the replacement of the tithe with the land tax. This change ultimately increased the political leverage of Bulgarian Christians locally and province-wide.

THE LAND TAX, EMIGRATION, AND COMPETING SOVEREIGNTIES

At the most basic level, the Ottoman government viewed this peacetime Muslim emigration from Eastern Rumelia as one aspect of a larger process of Muslim refugee settlement in the empire. Waves of Balkan Muslims had been seeking shelter and new life in Ottoman territories proper since the end of the Crimean War (1853–56), Russia's subjugation of the Caucasus, and, subsequently, the 1877–78 war.²⁰ The Special Refugee Commission set up to deal only with the consequences of the latter war functioned between 1879 and 1880. However, it was increasingly clear that Muslim immigrants from the Balkans and Russia were becoming a feature of Ottoman society.²¹ Providing food, shelter, clothing, housing, and arable land for the constant influx of impoverished, frightened, and dejected Muslims was, financially and logistically, a burdensome affair.²² Moreover social tensions arose between the arriving Muslim refugees from Russia and their hosting Ottoman families, villages, neighborhoods, and towns.²³ Adjustment to a new environment was, in any case, probably difficult enough for the Muslim refugees from the Balkans since the Ottoman government warned them that they would have a hard time getting used to a new climate.²⁴ So when Muslims from Eastern Rumelia started emigrating again,

²⁰ See Kemal H. Karpat, "The *Hijra* from Russia and the Balkans: The Process of Self-definition in the Late Ottoman State," in *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, ed. Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 131–52.

²¹ See Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleaning of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), *passim*.

²² See the records of the commission: BOA, BEO AYN. d. 1553.

²³ See Oktay Özel, "Migration and Power Politics: The Settlement of Georgian Immigrants in Turkey (1878–1908)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46 (2010): 477–96. On the broader social and political impact of Muslim immigration to the late Ottoman Empire, see Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁴ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 4/3, s. 69.

the Ottoman authorities unsurprisingly pressured for the resolution of their grievances so as to stop emigration.

This peacetime emigration from the Balkan territories of the empire also reminded Sultan Abdülhamid II that he was losing sovereignty over Rumeli—this old part of the empire, “the most precious of European lands”²⁵ which the Treaty of Berlin had shrunk yet again. And while the Great Powers held the Ottoman Empire as uncivilized, the Porte employed the same logic to hold accountable the Bulgarian-dominated Eastern Rumelian administration for the grievances of Muslims in the province. The fact that the provincial administration did not stop Muslim emigration prompted the Porte to paint Eastern Rumelia as incapable of good government. Hence to the serious concern in Istanbul with Turkish Muslim refugees from Eastern Rumelia, we should also add Sultan Abdülhamid II’s preoccupation with the image of his empire, or what Selim Deringil terms “Ottoman image management.”²⁶ That is to say, the sultan and his government projected Ottoman sovereignty internationally by emphasizing how much better they had governed over Muslims and Christians in comparison with Eastern Rumelia. And this was an important claim, for, as we may recall, Great Power interventions (diplomatic or military) in the Ottoman Empire were invariably justified as missions to rectify bad Ottoman governance.

By 1885, the year in which the Principality of Bulgaria took over the province, approximately 20 percent²⁷ of the rural Turkish Muslim population had emigrated from Eastern Rumelia. Inciting discord between Eastern Rumelia’s administration and the Ottoman government, this emigration raised the question of who was civilized enough to ensure good government for Christians and Muslims alike. For the empire this was an old and dangerous question: Eastern Rumelia was the product of Russian intervention ostensibly intended to remedy Ottoman misrule.²⁸ For Eastern Rumelia this question was new as the province itself. Both admin-

²⁵ The words belong to the statesmen and intellectual Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, quoted in Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris 2011), 136.

²⁶ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 135–41.

²⁷ See Liuben Berov, “Agrarnoto Dvizhenie v Iztochna Rumeliia po vreme na Osvobozhdenieto,” *Istoricheski Pregled* 12 (1956): 3–36. His numbers are bit high—I have used reports by prefects to come up with a more accurate number.

²⁸ In *Against Massacre* Rodogno shows very well how humanitarian intervention in effect diminished Ottoman sovereignty.

istrations, however, viewed emigrating Turkish Muslims as a malleable “flock” that could be swayed and whether this would be for the good or for the bad depended on the two centers of political authority—Istanbul and Filibe. Meanwhile, Turkish Muslims grappling with the difficulties of postwar reconstruction sent petitions both to Filibe and Istanbul, involving the two capitals in a heated exchange about who could secure better life of order, prosperity, and justice for Muslims.²⁹

In fall 1883, the Turkish Muslim elders (*heyet-i ihtiyariye*) of the village of ‘Arab (Filibe prefecture) sent a petition to Aleko Bogoridi with a couple of concerns. First, they opposed the introduction of the new method of taxation whereby, after the constitution of a new cadaster, the Ottoman in-kind tax, the tithe, was being replaced with a land tax. The elders believed that this process prompted Turkish Muslim emigration. As evidence, they pointed to the fact that nineteen families had left the village and nine more were ready to emigrate at the time of the petition’s preparation. Emigration was also costly; the “Bulgars” (i.e., Bulgarian Orthodox Christians) of ‘Arab bought the land and houses of the emigrating Turkish Muslim families, and successfully bargained for a collective (and hence lower) price on all the property for sale. In other words, Turkish Muslim villagers were trapped in a lose-lose situation: if they wanted to stay, they had to pay the land tax; if they wanted to leave Eastern Rumelia, they had to sell property cheaply. Second, “Bulgars” who had purchased the houses and land of emigrants moved into the midst of the Muslim neighborhood taking the place of Turkish Muslim emigrants. According to the elders, the growing number of Bulgars meant “the oppression of the needs of the Muslims [*ahali-i islamiye*].” The elders hastened to point out that they were worried not because “the Muslims feel aversion to the Bulgars,” but rather that the elders cared “for the protection of the affairs of the confessional communities [*umur-u mezhebiye*] and protection against the aspirations of communal transgressors [*udat milliyeleri*].” Transgression was manifest in the practice of “Bulgar young men” gathering around the village well and, without shame or fear, gazing at Muslim women. The demographic changes in the village had diminished the authority of the elders to such an extent that they were hard pressed to protect “women’s canonical stranger status.” And so the elders pleaded with the governor of Eastern Rumelia to enforce religiously separate neighborhoods so that there would be (as

²⁹ Villages from a district would usually group and write one petition. See for instance, BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 2/11, s.4, s. 25-3, s. 41.

before the war) a Muslim village quarter, in which, they implied, no one would challenge their authority or the gender relations that buttressed it.³⁰

The petition by the 'Arab elders reached both the provincial and the imperial capitals provoking heated exchanges over the causes of emigration. Governor Aleko Bogoridi pointed out that he could not enforce residential segregation as such a practice would run against the conception of legal equality enshrined in the provincial charter, the Organic Statute. But he was in any case altogether unconvinced by the claim that Bulgarian Christian settlement prompted the emigration of Turkish Muslims. Bogoridi had dispatched the Mevlevi Sheikh Ali Efendi and the notable İsmail Hakki to investigate the reasons for Muslim emigration from Eastern Rumelia. He emphasized that Muslims emigrated from the purely Muslim district of Kircaali and concluded that they were incorrigible.³¹ As for general complaints against the land tax, Vice Governor and Director of the Interior Gavril Krüstevich reiterated a similar logic. He argued that Turkish Muslims from Zagra-i Atik (a prefecture especially hard hit by the war) saw the caravans of Muslim emigrants from the Principality of Bulgaria and thought:

“Why is there emigration? There must be reasons.” They [the Turkish Muslims of Eastern Rumelia] ask the emigrants and they tell them: “Staying is impossible, we have to flee.” Ours [the Turkish Muslims of Eastern Rumelia] get influenced and follow. And the simple people, as you know, take their cue from those who are more influential, smarter, and wealthier. If these people say that it is necessary to emigrate, the simple people don't listen to anyone else. So this is what goes on with the Turkish population.³²

While Turkish Muslim emigration from Eastern Rumelia was certainly embedded in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78, it nonetheless peaked in 1882–83.³³ To the alarm of Bulgarian Christian politicians, even Bul-

³⁰ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 4/3, s. 78.

³¹ Ibid., s. 97.

³² *Dnevniitsi ot Petata Redovna Sessiia na Oblastnoto Sübranie (10-ii Oktomvri–10-ii Dekemvri 1883 g.): Stenografski Protokoli* (Sofia: Ianko S. Kovachev, 1892), 144.

³³ See *Doklad na Starozagorskii prefekt za süstoianieto na okrüga* (Stara Zagora: Pechatnitsa “Znanie,” 1884), 7–8, 12–15; *Doklad na Haskovskii prefekt za süstoianieto na okrüga* (Plovdiv: Khristo G. Danov, 1884), 8; *Doklad na Sliven-skii prefekt za süstoianieto na okrüga* (Sliven: Pechatnitsa na vestnik “Bülgarsko Zname,” 1884), 5.

garian Christian peasants began immigrating during the same period to the Principality of Bulgaria. Both population emigrations were connected to the particular implementation of the land tax, as numerous petitions bemoaned. The 1882–83 emigration is significant for two reasons. First, it was tied to Eastern Rumelia’s modernization efforts, i.e., the creation of standard land knowledge via the constitution of cadastral maps and ledgers, recording of individual plots measured with uniform measurement units, and delineation of clear boundaries. This process had to support the elimination of the tithe and the introduction of a land tax. Secondly, emigration reveals the consolidation of majority–minority logic of government understood in ethno-religious terms by Eastern Rumelians, which, in turn, encouraged Bulgarian Christian hegemony.

From the winter of 1881 onward (when the Law on the Cadaster was promulgated), groups of Turkish Muslims or entire villages began petitioning Filibe and Istanbul either to express consternation about the land tax or to demand tax breaks or help with work animals, tools, seed, and even food. Petitioners invariably connected the implementation of the new tax to the emigration of Turkish Muslims, particularly from mid-1882 onward, when the new cadaster was being constituted and the land tax determined. Petitioners perceived the new form of tax—which relied on projected revenue from land, based on its size, type, and estimated productivity as opposed to revenue excised from produce—as a policy that would deny them access to land and rob them of their social status as agricultural producers and land owners. The grim conclusion of the petition by the Muslim community at Zağra-i Atik was that the taxation policies of the provincial government were designed to ruin Muslims while favoring others, hinting at Bulgarian Christians.³⁴

One may wonder why the Eastern Rumelian administration persisted in promoting a new form of taxation that provoked so much controversy. First, the provincial Organic Statute mandated the establishment of a new cadaster and the introduction of a land tax. Second, a new provincial cadaster meant “new” knowledge about land and ownership, that is to say, imperial interpretations of land claims and taxation issues would be subordinated to provincial decisions. Put simply, monopoly over land knowledge was an assertion of autonomy. This did not go unnoticed by Turkish Muslim villagers. A petition by sixteen villages from the Yambol prefecture maintained that cadastral commissions simply displayed power: no actual

³⁴ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 2/11, s. 4, 25-1, 25-2, 25-3, 26.

measurement of agricultural plots occurred and the authority of the village mayor proved to be the final judgment on size and type of plots, which frequently resulted in the registration of plots smaller than the villagers knew them to be.³⁵ Corrupt or ill-meaning officials probably harmed villagers in this transition process. But gaps in measurement appeared also because officials worked with the Ottoman measure for land, *uvrat*, which had not been standardized, while, in their aim to create standard land knowledge, the officials treated the *uvrat* as if it had a fixed value.³⁶

In December 1883, Director of Finance Ivan Ev. Geshov concluded in his report to Aleko Bogoridi that the cadastral commissions had determined the land tax in such “irregular ways” that the variations in tax burden among the six prefectures of the province were considerable.³⁷ The “irregular ways” stemmed from the specific deployment of the tithe as the basis for establishing the preliminary cadaster and the land tax.³⁸ The land tax was based on an estimation of the tithe for the ten years up to 1878.³⁹ The tithe, however, used to be calculated in different regions for different cumulative periods. Some members of the provincial assembly noted that the land tax was a heavy burden on a postwar population.⁴⁰ Yet, the rather painful awareness of the agricultural (and otherwise) “backwardness” of Eastern Rumelia which Bulgarian Christian politicians shared had prompted them to support the introduction of the “more advanced” land tax. There was consensus among them that the tithe was old-fashioned, a “primitive system condemned by the entire educated [*obrazovan*] world” to which it “is impossible to return.”⁴¹ The tithe indexed to Bulgarian poli-

³⁵ Ibid., s. 4.

³⁶ See *Doklad na Starozagorski prefekt* (1884), 15. On discrepancies among units and methods for land measurements in the Ottoman Empire, see also Anton Minkov, “Mernata edinitsa za povürkhnost ‘dionium’ v administrativno-finansovata praktika na Osmanskata Imperiia (XV–XX v.),” *Istoricheski Pregled* 48 (1991): 47–53.

³⁷ Ivan Ev. Geshov, “Iztochno-Rumeliiski finansi,” in *Dumi i Dela. Finansovi i Ekonomicheski Studii* (Sofia: Iv. G. Govedarov i C-ie, 1899), 186–87.

³⁸ “Oblasten Zakon za sŭstavlennie na kadastr,” in *Oblasten sbornik ot zakoni v Iztochna Rumeliia* (Plovdiv: n.p., 1881), vol. 2, 263–324.

³⁹ See Vera S. Katsarkova, “Opiti za reformirane na danŭchnata sistema v Bŭlgariia v pŭrvite godini sled Osvobozhdenieto,” *Trudove na Visshiaa Ikonomicheski Institut ‘Karl Marks’ I* (1979): 165–203.

⁴⁰ See the opinions of Hakanov and Milkovski in *Dnevniitsi ot Petata Redovna Sesiia na Oblastnoto Sŭbranie (10-ii Oktomvri–10-ii Dekemvri 1883 g.): Stenografski Protokoli* (Sofia: Ianko S. Kovachev, 1892), 145, 148–49.

⁴¹ *Dnevniitsi ot Petata Redovna Sesiia*, 146, 150.

ticians both backwardness and Ottoman sovereignty. They were ready to recalculate, as happened in 1884, but not to repeal the land tax. Even this measure, though, was accompanied by the stigmatization of grievors as “negligent taxpayers” who were insufficiently “mature” to appreciate this mechanism of being included in the modern state.⁴²

As early as 1882, failure or fear of failing to meet taxation requirements prompted both Muslim and Christian landholders in the Filibe prefecture to take loans by mortgaging land.⁴³ Bulgarian Christians were in a particularly difficult situation because they had been buying up the land of emigrating Muslims; “storing” it as if undeterred by the ominous land tax.⁴⁴ Toward the end of 1883, one Bulgarian Christian delegate to the provincial assembly argued that Bulgarians were susceptible to emigration and concluded that “this emigration ... will devastate our beautiful province and will bring about enormous evil.”⁴⁵ He suggested that poverty and the land tax were the causes of emigration but demanded a thorough explanation from Director of the Interior Krüstevich and wanted to know if the administration had taken concerted action to stop emigration. The rumored numbers in this discussion for Bulgarian Christian emigration until fall 1883 varied from 2,000 to 5,000, but no one, not even Krüstevich, seemed keen on determining the exact numbers; he insisted that the actual emigration was much less than the rumored one.

Exact numbers did not concern the assembly members that much. They were worried that rural Bulgarian Christians were emigrating from Eastern Rumelia in general. This fateful discussion had an impact. When the assembly reconvened in 1884 again (in its regular session of October through December), Director of Finance Geshov spoke at length about the unfortunate prefecture of Zăgra-i Atik from which yet another petition by thirty-six villages against the cadaster had arrived. He advocated redis-

⁴² *Dnevniitsi ot Shestata Redovna Sessiia na Oblastното Sŭbranie, 22-ii Oktomvri–22-ii Dekemvri 1884 g.*: *Stenograficheski Protokoli* (Sofia: Ianko S. Kovachev, 1892), 319, 438. On taxation as way of articulating the modern subject, see Yanni Kostsonis, “‘No Place to Go’: Taxation and State Transformation in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia,” *Journal of Modern History* 76 (2004): 531–77, and “‘Face to Face’: The State, the Individual, and the Citizen in Russian Taxation, 1863–1917,” *Slavic Review* 63 (2004): 221–46.

⁴³ Dŭrzhaven Arkhiv (DA)-Plovdiv, f. 40k, op. 1.

⁴⁴ *Doklad na Starozagorskii prefekt* (1884), 49; See the Brezovo court records, DA-Plovdiv, f. 40k, op. 1.k, O-1; Katsarkova, “Opiti za reformirane,” 192; Iliev, *Spomeni*, 220–47; *Dnevniitsi ot Petata Redovna Sessiia*, 142, 144.

⁴⁵ *Dnevniitsi ot Petata Redovna Sessiia*, 139.

tributing the land tax among the prefectures, which would relieve that prefecture. Assembly member G. Gruev argued that the transition from the tithe to the land tax had been flawed from the start because it demanded more tax than the income of a person. Another assembly member, Boiadzhiev, invoked patriotism to demand the redistribution of the provincial land tax. At the very end of November the assembly passed a bill for the redistribution of all taxes on immovable property.⁴⁶ Thus, the cumulative land tax expected from each prefecture was modified so as to lower the burden of impoverished prefectures, such as Zăgra-i Atik. After the 1884 assembly session ended, the provincial Permanent Committee (the body that took care of legislative and budgetary issues when the assembly was not in session) promulgated a normative act. It forgave 300,000 *kurush* of unpaid land taxes for the fiscal years 1882/83 and 1883/84.⁴⁷ Turkish Muslims could benefit from these measures too, but they became effective after the peak of Muslim emigration from the middle of 1882 through 1883.

Why did only “Bulgarian emigration” move the assembly members? The very same discussion on the emigration of Bulgarian Christians produced consensus on the emigration of Turkish Muslims; they were viewed as a flock that could not be swayed through reason. One assembly member opined that it was unfortunate that the provincial administration had failed to exercise influence over emigrants through “good and honest Muslims.”⁴⁸ But, “the government could succeed only through persuasion, especially as regards the Muslim population, because this population, whatever good one does for it, still thinks that it can’t bear the conditions in our province.”⁴⁹ Assembly members contrasted this seemingly unreasonable behavior with the actions of thoughtful Bulgarian Christians who, before embarking on the journey, sent envoys to investigate the conditions in the Principality of Bulgaria. Reports that “not everything there is honey and butter”⁵⁰ persuaded potential emigrants to stay. But Muslim emigration appeared also to exemplify the course of modernity. As assembly member Bobchev concluded, it was “the fatal course of time which pushes this population to emigrate from these lands.”⁵¹ Eastern Rumelia

⁴⁶ *Dnevniitsi ot Shestata Redovna Sessiia*, 439–42, 535, 541.

⁴⁷ Katsarkova, “Opiti za reformirane,” 194 and 194n.

⁴⁸ *Dnevniitsi ot Petata Redovna Sessiia*, 140.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

was the “fatherland”⁵² of Bulgarian Christians, so it was only natural that Turkish Muslims would prefer to be in their Ottoman Empire, ruled by the Muslim sultan. Turkish Muslims did have misgivings about the Eastern Rumelian administration. Their appeal to the Porte to intervene so as to somehow remove the burdensome land tax⁵³ is as telling of their disillusionment with Filibe as it is of how much they still viewed Istanbul as the ultimate authority that could change the course of events in Eastern Rumelia. Turkish Muslims who emigrated may have also been prompted by the realization that they had limited capacity to sustain and find protection in Ottoman sovereignty in Eastern Rumelia.

Sultan Abdülhamid II had approved the law for the constitution of a new cadaster and the implementation of the land tax, though the Istanbul bureaucracy never stopped censuring the provincial administration for the shift from tithe to land tax. The shift was written into the Organic Statute, but the problem, the Porte insisted, was that Eastern Rumelia’s leaders lacked sound agricultural policy and experience how to govern all provincial subjects with justice.⁵⁴ Specifically, the administration was not competent enough to rejuvenate the agricultural credit-cooperatives, that landmark of Ottoman modernization and reform in the Balkans during the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ So both immature and insufficiently modern, this is how Istanbul painted Filibe, and hence not fit for autonomy. Yet, simultaneously the imperial government vetoed the attempt of the Eastern Rumelian administration to get a loan for the rebuilding of agriculture, fearing that the money would be used for the construction of a railway line between Yambol and Bergös—a route that would have released Eastern Rumelian goods from Ottoman customs levies.⁵⁶ The Porte also stalled any attempt at the reduction of the annual tribute that the province was obliged to pay to the Imperial Treasury.⁵⁷ The Porte was equally apprehensive of the financial strain on the Imperial Treasury and the social cost

⁵² Ibid., 148; the term was used by the assembly member Milkovski.

⁵³ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 2/11, s. 27.

⁵⁴ Ibid., s. 40, 172.

⁵⁵ See Roderic Davison’s chapter on Midhat Paşa in Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). For Ottoman agricultural policies and reforms in the Ottoman Empire, see Tevfik Güran, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı Üzerine Araştırmalar* (Istanbul: Eren, 1998).

⁵⁶ Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria, 1878–1918* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983), 92.

⁵⁷ See Geshov, “Iztochno-Rumeliiski finansi,” 179–91.

of refugee settlement, though it did provide land to settle Muslims fleeing from the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.⁵⁸ Aleko Bogoridi and Gavril Krüstevich used this practice to argue that the imperial government was coaxing Turkish Muslims to leave.

Even though in these diplomatic exchanges Turkish Muslims appear as an amorphous group and exact numbers are hardly ever present, inside the province, relative population numbers were of huge importance as Bulgarian Christians and Turkish Muslims competed for political and social capital. This is what the 'Arab petition suggests. In that particular context the Ottoman government paid scant attention, arguing that, "as for the issue of the mixed dwelling of Bulgars and Muslims ... since olden times [*min'ül-kadim*] the aforementioned mostly lived in mixed villages and therefore this is not a cause for emigration"; the real cause was the failure of provincial authorities to secure order and protection for Muslims.⁵⁹ Yet, the weakness that the 'Arab elders felt both at the local and the provincial levels of government was embedded precisely in a majority-minority continuum that fed on population migrations and gave political edge to Bulgarian Christians. As we will see shortly, Bulgarian politicians successfully used Muslim emigration in the political process. They worked to make Bulgarian Christians an ethnic and thence a political majority.

BULGARIAN CHRISTIAN POLITICAL HEGEMONY

Repatriation and repeated migration, embedded as they both were in the transformation of Ottoman land tenure due to reduced Ottoman sovereignty, prompted Turkish Muslims to begin regarding themselves as members of an ethno-religious community that competed for economic and political resources with Bulgarian Christians. Bulgarian Christians, on the other hand, claimed monopoly by defying Ottoman sovereignty, and perhaps even more consequentially, by equating Turkish Muslims with imperial power. Ethno-religious communal identification was a strategy to navigate change. This perhaps was already set in motion by the Tanzimat reforms in provincial administration which had to make good on the promise for equality between Muslims and non-Muslims by addressing a variety of social and economic problems stemming from conflicts between

⁵⁸ Aydın, *Şarkı Rumeli*, 30–31.

⁵⁹ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 4/3, s. 80.

land owners and cultivators.⁶⁰ For instance, the 1864 and 1871 provincial regulations mandated the creation of advisory councils to governors as well as county and district administrative councils. These reforms were first tested in the Balkan provinces of the Tuna/Danube and Edirne where councils usually consisted of two to four Muslims and two to four non-Muslims. The councils included appointed members, such as the religious leaders of each community, as well as “elected” members who were selected for two years in a two-step process of nomination from among the local elites.⁶¹ This did not amount to equal social and political power for Muslim and non-Muslim elites (not to mention ordinary subjects) while shared economic interests as well as advantageous social standing trumped common ethno-religious belonging.⁶²

In Eastern Rumelia, the political process became more socially inclusive than in the Tanzimat provinces of Tuna and Edirne but was more polarized along ethno-religious lines.⁶³ The political framework developed by the Great Powers ensured that ethno-religious groups rather than individuals associated along other interests would move the liberal political process in Eastern Rumelia. In setting up the province, the Great Powers

⁶⁰ M. Safa Saraçoğlu, “Resilient Notables: Looking at the Transformation of the Ottoman Empire from the Local Level,” in *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Matthew P. Romaniello and Charles Lipp (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 271.

⁶¹ M. Safa Saraçoğlu, “Sitting Together: Local Councils of Vidin County as Domains of Hybridization (1864–1877),” *CAS Working Papers Series 2* (2009), 7–10 and Saraçoğlu, “Resilient Notables,” 273; see also Yonca Köksal “Local Intermediaries and Ottoman State Centralization: A Comparison of the Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Ankara and Edirne (1839–1878)” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2002).

⁶² Köksal “Local Intermediaries and Ottoman State Centralization,” ch. 4; Petrov, “*Tanzimat* for the Countryside,” ch. 5. Telling in this respect is a letter by the Bulgarian leaders of Eni Zagora (Nova Zagora)/Zağra-i Cedid on behalf of the “Bulgarian people/nation [*narod*]” to the sultan, which condemned the revolutionary committee in Bucharest. See BOA, A. MKT. MHM 422 (76).

⁶³ With the adoption of a constitution and the expansion of voting rights since the 1860s, a similar dynamic prevailed in the Habsburg Empire. There political clubs and parties made linguistic and cultural differences the basis for political mobilization as they strove to delineate electorates and influence the various levels of administration, in the process also forging national identities. See Pieter M. Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

aimed to preserve the heterogeneous character of local society so as to balance each other's influence in the Ottoman lands. Thus, the balance among the Great Powers became entwined with the balance among the three main ethno-religious groups in the province: Bulgarian Christians, Turkish Muslims, and Greek Christians. No single ethno-religious group was supposed to dominate, i.e., Bulgarian Christians, and their ostensible protector Russia, could not be allowed to establish national hegemony. This meant equality among the three groups before the law as well as by political power sharing. To ensure balanced representation, the Organic Statute mandated that the religious leaders of all communities be part of the provincial assembly.⁶⁴ The European Commission created the Organic Statute with the familiar attitude toward Ottoman subjects (Muslim and non-Muslim) as insufficiently mature to meet liberal political standards. Bulgarian Christians were reminded to abide by liberal principles—treating Muslims equally and justly—as a qualification for circumscribed self-rule. This, by the way, was also the standard that Great Britain and France used to determine the fitness of their colonial subjects for self-rule.⁶⁵

The Organic Statute also introduced representative government and the framework of a democratic political process in Eastern Rumelia, which meant that political mobilization coupled with Muslim emigration undermined the ethno-religious balance envisioned by the European powers. What also challenged this power-sharing scheme were the recent political developments. Following the Bosnia-Herzegovina and April uprisings, the Russo-Ottoman War, and the concomitant loss of Balkan territories, Sultan Abdülhamid II had become wary of the reform conception of imperial citizenship (Ottomanism) that rested on equality between Muslims and non-Muslims. That very conception underlay Eastern Rumelia's political structure. Abdülhamid II's conception of Ottomanism privileged Islam as the focus of loyalty to the state and solidarity among his subjects.⁶⁶ Ottoman losses in the Balkan provinces where Christians predominated in many places were only one factor in Abdülhamid's reshaping of Ottomanism. His appeal to Islam as a tool of social cohesion was primarily intended to weaken proto-nationalist mobilization among Muslim Otto-

⁶⁴ See the abridged text in Iochev, *Zakonodatelstvoto v tsarstvo Bŭlgariia* (1879–1944 g.).

⁶⁵ See Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1339–40.

⁶⁶ Francois Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II: le sultan calife (1876–1909)* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2003), 194–95.

mans.⁶⁷ He fashioned an image as the “sultan caliph”—the leader of the Islamic community.⁶⁸ At home, Kemal H. Karpat has argued, Abdülhamid II tried to make “Islamic identity a source of self-esteem, dignity, and pride,” pointing to the compatibility between Islam and science, thereby encouraging the formation of modern Muslim political identity. Internationally, Abdülhamid’s adept manipulation of the title “caliph” kept the British and French worried about challenges to colonial domination from their numerous subjugated Muslim populations in Asia and Africa.⁶⁹ In territories that were no longer under direct Ottoman control—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Eastern Rumelia and Cyprus—Abdülhamid II affirmed his spiritual role and bid to protection of Muslims.⁷⁰ In the context of Eastern Rumelia, this role played out as the Porte tried to convince Muslims to stay put so that he could be an advocate for their rights and affirm his position as the imperial sovereign.

The peacetime emigration stemming from the problems of repatriation and changes in land tenure was a serious political concern for both Bulgarian Christians as well as for Turkish Muslims who remained in Eastern Rumelia. Relative population majorities and minorities determined the outcome of elections for the provincial assembly and influenced administrative appointments locally. As the ‘Arab elders feared, fewer Muslims meant weakened capability to influence events. The Bulgarian Eastern Rumelian politician Mikhail Madzharov characterized the first elections for the Eastern Rumelian legislative assembly in October 1879 as a struggle among “the Turks, the Greeks, and the Bulgarians.”⁷¹ He wrote matter-of-factly in his history of Eastern Rumelia that the designation of electoral regions was intended to give advantage to the Bulgarians so as to prove to the Berlin signatory powers that Eastern Rumelia was Bulgarian. The “right” candidate either for the assembly or an administrative position took on great importance, because the candidate was supposed to represent and protect the integrity of a specific ethno-religious group through-

⁶⁷ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 317–22; M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 142.

⁶⁸ Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II*, 194–95.

⁶⁹ Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 211–16, 323–25.

⁷⁰ Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II*, 197.

⁷¹ Mikhail Iv. Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumeliia (Istoricheski Pregled)* (Sofia: Pechatnitsa S. M. Staikov, 1925), 192–93.

out the province. Bulgarian Christians won the elections. The election results were contested, which Madzharov attributed especially to “Greek intrigues.”⁷² The self-evident existence of a Bulgarian majority warranted nothing less than complete political autonomy, “all those who loved freedom and self-rule for the country joined the Bulgarians, because only they advocated those principles. The Turks and the Greeks preferred the restoration of the old regime because only under it could they enjoy primacy (*pŭrvenstvo*).”⁷³ Once dominant in the assembly, the Bulgarian Christian delegates also pushed a voting method for the election of the Permanent Committee, which secured their majority on it in perpetuity. The Permanent Committee was elected at the beginning of each assembly session. When the assembly was not in session, the Permanent Committee could create normative acts (equivalent in power to laws) and alter the provincial budget.⁷⁴ As Bulgarian contemporaries testified, concentration of such unprecedented powers in the hands of Bulgarian Christians frightened both Turkish Muslims and Greek Christians.⁷⁵

Madzharov was not alone in linking ethno-religious population majority to political representation and autonomy. The very same minorities he feared saw its usefulness as well. Turkish Muslims from the district of Bergos calculated their number to be 45,000, which, as they claimed, made them a majority and therefore entitled them to choosing from among themselves the head of the district. A Bulgarian Christian was appointed instead. The same occurred in the districts of Ahivali, Aydos, and Karınabad/Karnobat (all in the prefecture of Bergos) where Muslims emphasized that “Muslims” and “Greeks [*Rum*]” together outnumbered the “Bulgars.”⁷⁶ Frustrated with the outcome of assembly elections and the ascendancy of Bulgarian Christians, Turkish Muslims tried to create a territorial majority by imagining common political front with Greek Christians. Nothing unlawful had occurred in Bergos. The head of a district was an appointed position, not an elected one. The city councils in the capitals

⁷² Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumeliia*, 191–92, 197–98.

⁷³ Here “those” refers to (in addition to Bulgarian-speaking Orthodox Christians) Bulgarian-speaking Catholics as well as Jews, and Armenians. Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumeliia*, 194.

⁷⁴ Ivan Ev. Geshov, “Iztochna Rumeliia i izborŭt na pŭrviia postoianen komitet,” in *Spomeni i Studii* (Sofia: P. Glushkov, 1928), 125–39.

⁷⁵ See Mikhail Iv. Madzharov, *Spomeni*, ed. Veselin Andreev (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Pisatel, 1968).

⁷⁶ BOA, Ş.D. RŞ 1999/5, s. 13.

of the provincial prefectures proposed to the Department of the Interior a list of candidates from whom the district head was selected and then approved by the director of the interior and the governor.⁷⁷ The fact that Turkish Muslims reached out for a potential political coalition with Greek Christians highlights the politicization of ethnicity and religion. Representation and political clout could be achieved by maximizing the advantages of a specific population, circumscribed by ethnic and religious markers. By definition, representative government encourages the formation of political majorities and minorities. But in Eastern Rumelia, these categories could never be divorced from ethnicity and religion. And, in practice, Bulgarian Christians could not become a political minority as the most numerous population in the province.

Eastern Rumelia's administration encouraged ethno-religious identification, even polarization. Simultaneously with the creation of a new cadaster, a bill was drafted for a new administrative division of the province. The Porte objected that this change threatened to weaken Muslims socially and politically by shifting the administrative subordination of both villages as well as districts. The Ottoman Council of State exercised its sovereign right enshrined in the Organic Statute and struck down the bill for administrative reorganization. Governor Bogoridi claimed that the new law was simply fulfilling the provision of the Organic Statute, which mandated that a prefecture should not consist of fewer than four and more than six districts.⁷⁸ Bogoridi argued that the Porte objected only because the bill relied on the population census conducted after the establishment of the province, which unequivocally demonstrated the existence of a Bulgarian Christian majority. The provincial population census from 1880 set the number of inhabitants at 815,946, of whom 573,560 were marked as Bulgarian and 174,700 as Turks.⁷⁹ The Ottoman government demanded the use of population figures culled before the war, which would have disregarded Muslim emigration and affirmed imperial bureaucratic knowledge regarding the population of Eastern Rumelia.⁸⁰ Insisting on prewar census information was important to the sultan and the Porte since by 1881 they were in the process of preparing

⁷⁷ Zhorzheta Nazŭrska, "Gavril Krŭstevich i Direktsiia na Vŭtreshnite Dela v Iztochna Rumeliia (1879–1884 g.)," *Izvestiia na Dŭrzhavnite Arkhivi* 69 (1995), 12.

⁷⁸ BOA, Ş.D. RŞ 1999/26, s. 5, 7.

⁷⁹ Statelova, *Iztochna Rumeliia*, 14.

⁸⁰ BOA, ŞD 1999/26, s. 2.

to conduct a new population survey that counted Muslims and non-Muslims separately. Furthermore, the census was to be followed by administrative reorganization. The actual registration began in 1882 but it took probably a decade before it was considered complete.⁸¹ Hence for Istanbul to accept Filibe's population figures amounted to tearing the ties of sovereignty between Sultan Abdülhamid II and Eastern Rumelian Muslims. And it was of course Muslim emigration related to the war from which the provincial bill sought to benefit, especially when electoral regions were being designated. In 1881 this was important because half of the assembly was up for reelection. The official newspaper *Maritsa* published an appeal by assembly members, which urged Bulgarians, especially those in the religiously mixed electoral regions, not to divide over candidates lest minorities benefit.⁸²

Yet ethno-religious group unity tended to be more precarious than Madzharov would have it or the Bergös Muslim petitioners from above may have wished to acknowledge. Turkish Muslim notables (*vücu**h*) distrusted those among them who were appointed to various higher administrative positions, seeing in them seeds of communal disloyalty and accordingly appealing to the Ottoman government to "protect" the community. For example, in the late fall of 1879 notables from six prefectures wrote a petition to the Porte in which they asked for imperial intercession in removing the notable Hacı İsmail Ağa as a member of the Court of Appeals in Filibe. The "Muslim community detested him," they insisted, for he was not only "ignorant" but also "did not bother to disturb his peace" while "Muslims were being ruined." He had done nothing in favor of the two notables Hacı Arif Ağa and Hacı Şaban Ağa (see the first chapter) when the Provisional Russian Administration sentenced them to death.⁸³ His ignorance appears to have stemmed from his acceptance of the autonomy of Eastern Rumelia by choosing to be a civil servant. Perhaps his action also provoked the jealousy of the above notables, who may have wished one of them to be appointed to the position. The appeal of the notables to the Porte to intervene as well as the expectation that it would recognize the true "Muslim interests" shows that as Turkish Muslims strove to define and protect their interests in Eastern Rumelia, they

⁸¹ Kemal H. Karpat, "Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/1882–1893," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (1978): 237–74, here 253–56.

⁸² Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumeliia*, 236–37; *Maritsa*, no. 279, 24 April 1881.

⁸³ BOA, Ş.D. RŞ 1995/5, s. 2, 11, 12–14.

challenged Filibe's claims to autonomy. Not less importantly, the fact that Hacı İsmail Ağa was appointed to the Court of Appeals also reveals that the new political configurations opened possibilities for social mobility.

And while Bulgarian Christians were attaining a politically hegemonic position, unity among them was a precarious matter as well, which is the reason the administration did not actively try to stop Muslim emigration. In 1881 (the year of the new cadaster and the new administrative division) a group of liberals from the Principality of Bulgaria immigrated to Eastern Rumelia in an act of protest against the suspension of the Bulgarian constitution and heavy-handed Russian influence. They joined the Liberal Party of Eastern Rumelia and proclaimed one of their main goals to be independent rule for Eastern Rumelia without the interference of any Great Power, including Russia, and the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁴ Though this radical stance was initially directed toward the principality as a rebuke to Prince Alexander Battenberg and Russia, the position of the Liberals increasingly advanced the idea of political, national autonomy, as opposed to administrative only, for Eastern Rumelia.⁸⁵ And unlike the National Party in the province, the Liberals supported union with the Principality of Bulgaria only if the constitution were restored.⁸⁶ The intensified Turkish Muslim and Bulgarian Christian emigrations following the implementation of the land tax gave urgency to the issue of "national unity" among politicians and catapulted to the center of politics the question of unification with the Principality of Bulgaria.

In fact, talks, hopes, and preparations for an eventual union had never stopped either in the principality or in the province. Prince Battenberg advocated a union and received the blessing of the Bulgarian Exarch Iosif who also encouraged priests from the principality to go to Eastern Rumelia and preach unification. Prince Battenberg's foreign minister Vülkovich and Eastern Rumelia's Ivan Ev. Geshov were in close touch should an opportune moment for unification arise.⁸⁷ The leaders of the principality and the province were well aware of British and Russian opposition to unification as both empires hoped for quiet Balkans while they pursued their bids for domination of Central Asia. Nonetheless, in May 1880 delegates from Eastern Rumelia's cities and villages as well as two envoys from the Principality of Bulgaria met in the provincial city of İslimiye to dis-

⁸⁴ Iono Mitev, *Süedinenieto 1885* (Plovdiv: Hristo G. Danov, 1985), 140–43.

⁸⁵ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 90–91.

⁸⁶ Mitev, *Süedinenieto*, 140–43; see also *Narodnii Glas*, no. 386, 16 April 1883.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 114–22.

cuss unification. They decided to set up a central committee to supervise the establishment of regional committees that would revive the abolished gymnastic associations once created by the Russian occupation authorities. The idea was to maintain a popular level of mobilization as well as to deposit the funds of gymnastic associations in the central bank of the principality. News of these unification efforts worried Russian diplomats in Istanbul who informed both polities that their actions were premature and would not elicit Russia's support.⁸⁸

Despite the opposition of the Great Powers, popular mobilization in Eastern Rumelia continued with funds from the Principality of Bulgaria.⁸⁹ Prince Battenberg eagerly supported the unification cause to garner approval after his highly unpopular suspension of the constitution in 1881. At the beginning of 1882 he initiated talks with Eastern Rumelian politicians who, afraid of an international backlash and annoyed with Battenberg's actions toward absolutist rule, were lukewarm to his ideas. The principality's foreign ministry also wished to lead the process of unification, fearful that the Bulgarians in Eastern Rumelia would get used to the status quo and may end up preferring Aleko Bogoridi to Alexander Battenberg. They actively courted the opposition National Party of Eastern Rumelia to undermine Bogoridi. Toward the end of the year, with tacit Russian support, Battenberg appointed a new envoy to Eastern Rumelia who was charged with working toward unification. He was given ample funds to publish a newspaper called *Unification* through which some of the most famous writers and prewar national activists propagated national unity. Meaning, the Principality of Bulgaria had to be the nucleus around which all Bulgarians, from Eastern Rumelia as well as from Ottoman Macedonia and Thrace, would coalesce.⁹⁰

Under the influence of the exiled liberals *Unification* quickly strayed away from Battenberg's narrow message to link unity with the restoration of the constitution. The resulting tensions between Battenberg and Bogoridi and the general opposition in Eastern Rumelia to Battenberg's absolutist style undermined his hope to serve as a unifying figure and stalled the unification process as well.⁹¹ It was at a low point anyhow because Great Britain viewed its rival Russia as the primary beneficiary of a merger between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.

⁸⁸ Statelova and Pantev, *Sŭedinenieto*, 24–26.

⁸⁹ Mitev, *Sŭedinenieto*, 114–22; Statelova and Pantev, *Sŭedinenieto*, 26.

⁹⁰ Statelova and Pantev, *Sŭedinenieto*, 34–36.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 37–40.

Frustrated with the international status quo as well as with the suspension of the constitution, politicians in the principality and the province instead directed their energies to advancing Bulgarian national mobilization in Macedonia and Thrace by supporting the efforts of the Bulgarian Exarchate to obtain bishoprics from the Patriarch of Constantinople. This strategy backfired. It further intensified the tensions between the Exarchate and the Patriarchate. It also provoked conflicts with the Porte which threatened in fall 1883 to revoke the imperial edict that had established the Exarchate. In the winter of 1885 the Porte refused to grant permissions to two Exarchate bishops to work in Macedonia, and began persecuting Bulgarian teachers there.⁹²

By the end of 1883 the tensions between the principality's government and the province's administration had subsided because Battenberg restored the constitution in September 1883 thus removing from the unionist cause a major obstacle: the conflict between the liberals who conditioned unification on a functioning constitutional monarchy and the conservatives for whom unification was primary. By May 1884 Eastern Rumelian officials had negotiated favorable terms for a loan of 60,000 Ottoman *lira* from the principality's central bank. The funds were intended for reviving the agricultural credit-cooperatives as well as improving conditions in the countryside.⁹³ It is perhaps this loan that gave confidence to the provincial Permanent Committee in 1884 to forgive unpaid land taxes in an effort to curb Bulgarian Christian emigration from Eastern Rumelia.

In early spring 1884 a window of opportunity for the unionist cause was opened by the ending of Aleko Bogoridi's mandate. Since his reappointment was sabotaged both by Russian diplomats and the National Party in opposition, the Porte appointed Gavril Krüstevich as his successor. Allying himself with the National Party he reappointed National Party administrative officials who had been dismissed by Bogoridi and called for assembly elections. Though Krüstevich himself was not a unionist, the National Party took the reins of power from the Liberals by presenting itself as the bearer of "national unification."⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid., 41–50.

⁹³ Ibid., 46; Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 95; See Bobchev's list of laws in *Iztochna Rumeliia: istoricheski pregled, ustroistvo, zakonodatelstvo i pravosüdie* (Sofia: Pechatnitsa "Khudozhnik," 1924).

⁹⁴ Mitev, *Süedinenieto*, 151–53; Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 91.

Yet, the “national unification” of the National-cum-Unionist Party entailed tacit support for Turkish Muslim emigration while keeping rural Bulgarian Christians inside Eastern Rumelia thereby justifying its existence as a “Bulgarian province.” Thus, the desperate measures taken in 1884 to stop rural Bulgarian Christians from immigrating to the Principality of Bulgaria were measures not only to help “our sick country,”⁹⁵ as one assembly member had characterized Eastern Rumelia in the October 1883 discussion on emigration. They also aimed at demonstrating yet again that Bulgarian Christians were the majority in the province. Having come to power on the rhetoric of unification, the Unionists in fact held on to the politics of majority-minority balance which characterized Eastern Rumelia. Rural Turkish Muslim emigration, which Bulgarian Christian politicians were not committed to preventing, certainly alleviated concerns about a countryside depopulated of Bulgarian Christians who were supposed to demonstrate the obvious need for Bulgarian sovereignty by their presence.

The national unity card on which the Unionists came to power and which they anticipated being able to control, betrayed them. Throughout 1884 agitation for unification gathered speed both in the principality and in the province. Also, Zakhari Stoianov, a veteran of the April Uprising, published the first volume of his history of the uprising which resonated widely among Bulgarian Christians in both polities while earning him acclaim as a writer and a fighter for national unity. He became the chairman of a secret revolutionary committee founded in Filibe in February 1885 whose agenda originally focused on the liberation of Macedonia though quickly expanded to include the liberation and unity of all Bulgarians. Soon the committee began preparing for an armed struggle other nationalist veterans, members of the disbanded gymnastic-military associations, and participants in the Russo-Ottoman War. These mobilization efforts infused the unionist cause with energy and provided it with organization.⁹⁶ During late spring and summer 1885 branches of that committee were hectically preparing the population for a revolt and union with the principality. They consistently undermined the legitimacy of the new provincial administration by calling it pseudo-unionist and by advocating acts of insubordination like the nonpayment of taxes. The prefect of Zăgra-i Atîk Atanas Iliev wrote in his memoirs that in the summer of 1885 guns were stolen from the municipality of the Chirpan district. He was

⁹⁵ *Dnevniitsi ot Petata Redovna Sessiia*, 150.

⁹⁶ Statelova and Pantev, *Sŭedinenieto*, 53–55.

also horrified that the newspaper *Borba* (Fight) advocated disobedience to the Eastern Rumelia administration.⁹⁷

On 5 September 1885 the revolutionary committees started seizing power locally and in the evening Governor Krüstevich was forced to step down. Unity with the Principality of Bulgaria was officially proclaimed in Filibe on the next day, 6 September. The central revolutionary committee set up a temporary administration and then disbanded itself. Prince Battenberg called an emergency session of the Parliament during which he officially recognized the union between the Principality of Bulgaria and the autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia. In the midst of all the excitement, Prime Minister Petko Karavelov was deeply worried about how Prince Battenberg's and Tsar Alexander III's (1881–1894) mutual dislike would affect the union's future. Anticipating Great Power opposition to the Bulgarians' breach of the Treaty of Berlin, Karavelov's government pleaded with St. Petersburg for support, hoping that Russia's blessing would make the international recognition of the union easier.⁹⁸ Karavelov's hopes came to naught. Meanwhile, some Eastern Rumelian politicians, though believers in national unity, were unpleasantly surprised by the coup, viewing it as an act of aggression rather than national unification, especially if they lost previous administrative positions. Some even left for Istanbul as political exiles.⁹⁹ Zăgra-i Atik's prefect, Atanas Iliev, presented the change of administration as the principality's imposition of a rule that was less civilized, less just, and less competent than the Eastern Rumelian one.¹⁰⁰

Lacking Russian support and in clear violation of the Treaty of Berlin, the merger between the principality and the province triggered conflict among the principality, Serbia, and Greece, all of which harbored their own unredeemed irredentist ambitions. Meanwhile, Ottoman troops quickly occupied the primarily Muslim border city of Kırcaali and a few villages in its hinterland as well as those villages in the Rhodope Mountain which had refused to submit to Eastern Rumelian authority. Bent on resolving the escalating tensions diplomatically, the Great Powers called a conference of their ambassadors in Istanbul.¹⁰¹ Once again nationalist ambitions and imperial rivalries clashed on the diplomatic arena, further

⁹⁷ Iliev, *Spomeni*, 258–61.

⁹⁸ Statelova and Pantev, *Süedinenieto*, 76–89; Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 52–63.

⁹⁹ See Madzharov, *Spomeni*, 336–39; Iliev, *Spomeni*, 299–303.

¹⁰⁰ Iliev, *Spomeni*, 299–300.

¹⁰¹ Statelova and Pantev, *Süedinenieto*, 91–92, 96, 112.

limiting Ottoman sovereignty, irritating the principality's territorial aspirations, and driving a wedge between the principality and Russia.

Ultimately, both diplomacy and war with Serbia settled this international crisis. While the Istanbul ambassadors' conference was taking place, it became clear that the tsarist government—to Bulgarian politicians' distress—opposed the union and shunned Prince Battenberg. Realizing that the Great Powers were ready to accept the unification, the Serbian King Milan decided to act alone in seeking territorial compensation after the Bulgarians' breach of the Treaty of Berlin. Serbia specifically claimed territories in the western and northwestern part of the Principality of Bulgaria. Unrestrained by its patron Austria-Hungary, Serbia declared war on Bulgaria on 2 November 1885. After two weeks of heavy fighting and casualties on both sides, the Bulgarian forces emerged victorious.¹⁰²

The end of the war, the conclusion of the ambassadors' conference in Istanbul, Britain's explicit acceptance of the unification as well as the reversal of Russia's position opened the possibility for direct diplomatic negotiations between the Ottoman government and the Principality of Bulgaria on the future of Eastern Rumelia. Sultan Abdülhamid II dispatched to Filibe the Ottoman officials Gadban Efendi and Lebib Efendi who were charged with conveying Ottoman resolve for force if the status quo ante were not restored. Their real mission was to consult with the French, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian consuls in order to gauge local sentiment and then use their discretion whether to deliver the message from Istanbul. Principality authorities were likewise instructed to treat the Ottoman envoys with respect but to make it clear that the unification was not reversible. Bulgarian protests accompanied the two officials everywhere. Meanwhile, direct talks between Prince Battenberg and Gadban Efendi became possible due to secret negotiations between Britain and Germany as well as because Russia withdrew from its earlier position that the Ottomans should invade Eastern Rumelia.¹⁰³

By New Year's Eve 1886 discussions had yielded a preliminary agreement whereby Eastern Rumelia would be transferred to the Principality of Bulgaria. On 24 March 1886 the Ottoman-Bulgarian agreement, known also as the Tophane Convention, was signed by the Russian, British, Austro-Hungarian, French, German, and Italian ambassadors to Istan-

¹⁰² Ibid., 8, 153–54, 165.

¹⁰³ F. A. K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers, 1878–1888* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1996), 168–69; Statelova and Pantev, *Süedinenieto*, 160–61.

bul. Upon Russian insistence Battenberg's name was dropped from the agreement thus opening the door for his removal. The Ottoman Empire retained its right for military intervention and annual tribute. In addition, the city of Kircaali and its district, including the rebellious Turkish Muslim villages as well as those of the Pomaks in the Rhodope Mountains, were officially transferred to the Ottoman Empire. This move further complicated questions of land ownership in the border region and provoked Muslim-Christian antagonisms as we will see in the next chapter.¹⁰⁴

In the newly enlarged Principality of Bulgaria, quick steps were taken to consolidate the unification. Eastern Rumelia's budget was folded into that of the Principality of Bulgaria and its tax laws were extended to the former province as well. Officials from Sofia were dispatched to what now became—from Bulgarians' perspective—southern Bulgaria in order to fill up administrative positions. Men became liable to compulsory military service for the united army. Battenberg called for special parliamentary elections in southern Bulgaria and a joint session of the National Assembly convened on 2 June 1886.¹⁰⁵ These initial measures rode the wave of the energetic Bulgarian nationalism that had sustained the leaders of unification through diplomatic uncertainties and the dangers of war with Serbia. Soon, as we will see in the next chapter, Tsar Alexander III's displeasure with Prince Alexander Battenberg plunged the unified polity into an international diplomatic rollercoaster and domestic polarization over foreign policy orientation.

Eastern Rumelia's name disappeared fairly quickly from mainstream Bulgarian public and political discourse but the province inherited an important legacy to the united principality: claims to Bulgarian sovereignty were bound with governing Muslims always in negotiation or conflict with the Ottoman Empire. Eastern Rumelia's and the Ottoman Empire's competing claims to sovereignty had emerged from their efforts to manage and explain the causes of Turkish Muslim emigration. Their departure enabled the transfer of Turkish Muslim properties to Bulgarian Christians, and allowed Bulgarian Christian politicians to exploit the democratic political process by conflating their ethno-religious majority with a political majority. Turkish Muslims who remained, understood that their loss of land and diminishing numbers marginalized them, and they responded by trying to

¹⁰⁴ Statelova and Pantev, *Süedinenieto*, 158–69; Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 177–78.

¹⁰⁵ Statelova and Pantev, *Süedinenieto*, 171.

preserve or create a majority at the local level and urging direct Ottoman involvement in the province. Thus, managing landed property transfers and population migration became the primary means by which Eastern Rumelia's administration, Turkish Muslims, and the Ottoman government tried to negotiate the existing global arrangements that limited both Bulgarian and Ottoman bids to sovereignty. The "corporatist" model of subjecthood that Eastern Rumelia developed in its short existence fused the traditional religious categorization of Ottoman subjects with an ethnic one, under the umbrella of representative government. The tension between group belonging and individual politicization that emerged in Eastern Rumelia was carried over to the Principality of Bulgaria, and after 1908 to the Kingdom of Bulgaria where it became an important component of nation building in Bulgaria both among Bulgarian Christians and Turkish Muslims.

CHAPTER FOUR

Anchoring Unified Bulgaria on “Muslim” Land

The unification between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia began a process that forced the Ottoman Empire and its Bulgarian vassal to redefine their relationship. As Eastern Rumelia was being developed into southern Bulgaria through administrative, political, and economic measures the landed properties of Turkish Muslims became an important source of capital for this transformation. Furthermore, statesmen grounded their claims to national sovereignty in setting the rules for “Muslim” land. Between 1885 and 1908 (when independence was proclaimed) successive Bulgarian governments (especially the Ministry of Finance) worked to control or appropriate both *çiftliks* (landed estates) and *vakıfs* (religious endowments). On one hand statesmen expected that *çiftliks* and *vakıfs* would yield profit to the economically fledgling principality. On the other, they symbolized the ties of imperial sovereignty that still bound the Principality of Bulgaria with the Ottoman Empire. Hence appropriation or control of “Muslim” land became an essential component of the twin projects of economic development and asserting national sovereignty. Importantly, governmental steps to wrest *çiftlik* and *vakıf* lands and/or profit from their resources were accompanied by the elaboration of special regulations governing *vakıfs*, which affected not only landownership but mediated the relationship between the principality’s Muslims and the state, and society more broadly. In short, transforming Eastern Rumelia into southern Bulgaria turned Turkish Muslims into Bulgarian citizens on whose landed properties statesmen grounded claims to national sovereignty.

CHALLENGES TO THE UNIFICATION

Russia's unyielding refusal to acknowledge the union with Prince Battenberg at the helm forced him to abdicate in August 1886. Shortly thereafter, the National Assembly (*Narodno Sŭbranie*) appointed three regents and then sent a telegram to the Russian tsar Alexander III stating the regents' intention to call elections for a new assembly that would also select a prince. The telegram ended by imploring Alexander III to continue protecting the Bulgarians in their efforts to achieve national unity and full independence. Neither Battenberg's departure and the appointment of a regency nor this conciliatory telegram could end the standoff with Russia. Ultimately, the tsar wished to dictate the method and choice of Battenberg's successor, which became clear when Russia's military attaché in Vienna was dispatched on a tour around the northern principality to mobilize those who opposed the regency and the government. This crisis precipitated a lasting domestic polarization over foreign policy orientation as well as the consolidation of two political camps: 1) a pro-Russian one that insisted that Bulgaria's future depended on Russia's patronage and thus Alexander Battenberg had to leave; 2) an anti-Russian one that equated Bulgaria's unity and claims to national sovereignty with the person of the prince and more broadly with no domestic interference by the Great Powers. Elections for a Grand National Assembly were held anyway and, with violence and intimidation, those in power won the elections. The assembly gave the government a mandate to look for a new head of state.¹

By February 1887 it looked like a new prince was agreed upon after Bulgarian statesmen had traveled and consulted extensively with Austro-Hungarian, German, Italian, French, and Ottoman diplomats. The choice fell on Prince Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg-Gotha whose mother was the daughter of the French King Louis Philippe.² Austrian intercessions with the Russian ambassador at Vienna on behalf of the Bulgarians failed to soften Tsar Alexander's resolve to treat the entire process as illegitimate. Meanwhile, in northern Bulgaria revolts broke out led by Russophile officers and were brutally suppressed. Pro-government orga-

¹ Elena Statelova and Stoicho Grüncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia 1878–1944 Tom III* (Sofia: Anubis, 1999), 94–97.

² Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 123.

nizations terrorized the opposition and the ordinary population. The Bulgarian government and the regents became convinced that waiting for the powers to come to an agreement posed serious threats to domestic order and endangered the very existence of the country. Encouraged by Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha's support and Sultan Abdülhamid's strategic passivity, the Grand National Assembly elected Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in June 1887 and began preparations for his coronation, which took place on 2 August 1887.³ None of the Great Powers recognized him officially, though French and German diplomats in Sofia kept touch with him privately, while the Porte maintained close relations with the Bulgarian diplomatic agency in Istanbul.⁴ A new government was formed that included the three former regents. The prime minister and the dominant figure was the former regent Stefan Stambolov.⁵

Prince Ferdinand arrived to a country that had lived through a war and a wave of violence due to the conflicts between the pro- and anti-Russian political camps. Hatred and discord still simmered, nourished as they were, by the dictatorial methods of Stambolov's government. Bulgaria was internationally isolated and shunned by its former protector Russia.

At the same time relations between Sofia and Istanbul were normalizing. Yet Muslims emigrated from the Principality of Bulgaria. While some waited until they could sell their belongings and then immigrate to the Ottoman Empire, others fled in a hurry and apparently congregated on the streets of Istanbul expecting food, shelter, money, and resettlement from the Ottoman government. The Porte was afraid to keep so many impoverished people in the middle of the imperial capital and demanded from governors of the European provinces of the empire to settle the refugees as quickly as possible.⁶

After this initial rush to leave the principality, Turkish Muslim emigration slowed down; urban and rural Turkish Muslims renewed efforts to adapt to the new political realities.⁷ Whenever emigration did take place,

³ F. A. K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers 1878–1888* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1996), 241; Statelova and Grüncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia*, 98–103.

⁴ Statelova and Grüncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia*, 105.

⁵ For a thorough study of the Stambolov era in Bulgarian politics, see Stoicho Grüncharov *Politicheskite sili i monarkhicheskiat institut v Bŭlgariia 1886–1894* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1984).

⁶ BOA, Y. PRK. DH 1/101, s. 1.

⁷ Methodieva, "Reform, Politics and Culture," 43–98.

however, Bulgarian authorities usually attributed the occurrence to the allegedly inherent Muslim fanaticism and traditionalism, regarding Turkish Muslims as a population bound to leave “until they all emigrate.”⁸ The Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs, for example, was eager to show to the Porte that the principality did not promote emigration. In 1889–90 the ministry sought the Porte’s assistance in preventing Ottoman *mollas*⁹ from traveling to Bulgaria during Ramadan because, the ministry explained, they urged Turkish Muslims to immigrate to the empire so as to live under a Muslim ruler.¹⁰

Slightly more nuanced explanations about emigration circulated as well. For example, the governor of Stara Zagora reported that rural Turkish Muslims emigrated because it became increasingly difficult for them to maintain religious and cultural institutions (such as mosques, schools, and marriage arrangements) since fewer Muslims remained.¹¹ Burgas’ governor wrote somewhat exasperatingly in his report for the year 1892–93 that Muslims were intransigent about immigrating to the Ottoman Empire due to their “antiquated traditions” but underscored that emigration “causes great harm because our land loses many working hands, the state loses revenue, and therefore our population should treat the Turkish one very well, provide help, give it full freedom as it already has.”¹² But by the end

⁸ See, for example, the reports of provincial governors *Doklad na Staro-Zagorskii okrúzhnen upravitel za sústoianieto na Staro-Zagorskoto okrúzhie za vreme ot 1-i Avgust 1889 do 1-i Avgust 1890 god* (Plovdiv: “Edinstvo,” 1890), 6; *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Plovdivskoto okrúzhie* (Plovdiv: “Súglasie,” 1891), 5; *Doklad za obshtoto sústoianie na Burgaskii okrúg prez 1891–92 godina* (Burgas: Iv. Kiradzhiev, 1892), 7; *Doklad za obshtoto sústoianie na Burgaskii okrúg prez 1892–1893, 23*; *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Plovdivskii okrúg prez 1892–93 godini* (Plovdiv: “Edinstvo,” 1893), 16; *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Haskovskii okrúg prez 1892–1893 godina* (Haskovo: A. Mazenov, 1893), 3; *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Haskovskii okrúg prez 1894–95 godina* (Haskovo: A. Mazenov, 1895), 5; *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Staro-Zagorskoto okrúzhie prez 1897–1898 god.* (Stara Zagora: “Svetlina,” no. 507, 1898), 5.

⁹ *molla* (Tr.): theological student; doctor of Muslim law, *Redhouse Türkçe/Osmanlıca-İngilizce Sözlüğü*.

¹⁰ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 369, l. 1, 2.

¹¹ *Izlozhenie St.-Zagorskii okr. upravitel za obshtoto sústoianie na St.-Zagorskii okrúg prez 1894–95 godina* (Kazanlúk: “Nadezhda” No. 332, 1895), 13.

¹² *Doklad za obshtoto sústoianie na Burgaskii okrúg prez 1892–1893*, 23. This “benevolent” attitude could also have arisen due to the arrival of poor Jewish immigrants in the province of Burgas. The governor was quite angry that this “miserly tribe” (p. 25) would apparently accumulate wealth and deprive Bulgarians of land in a short time through speculation and usury. To him, the

of the nineteenth century governors increasingly stressed that “most [Muslims] could not get used to the progress [*napredük*] in the country.”¹³

This narrative of backwardness was a convenient explanatory tool for the authorities as they could not stop emigration, though Muslim grievances were also embedded in the precarious political situation after the unification. The new border between the Principality of Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire proved to be notoriously unstable until the proclamation of independence in 1908 (and even afterward). Sometimes the border cut across pastures and wood groves which had been shared by villages that were now on opposite sides of the demarcation line; other times formerly shared lands were assigned to villages on one side only. Sheep herds that used to graze both in the province and the empire, traversing the porous frontier, could no longer do so. It is no surprise then that restricted access to agricultural resources provoked vandalism, theft, and peasant fights, which came to be interpreted by the annoyed Bulgarian and Ottoman authorities exclusively as examples of one-sided ethno-religious aggression. For example, two villages along the border, Breze (Ottoman territory) and Vürbovo (Bulgarian territory) came to blows in 1888 over an area called “Duliata” in which there were pastures as well as fields belonging to villagers from both Breze and Vürbovo. According to the Vürbovo residents, who complained to the Plovdiv governor, several Pomaks from Breze entered the “Duliata,” beat up Vürbovo Bulgarian Christians, chased them away, stole the food of their cattle, and then let their own sheep and goats go into the fields.¹⁴ Few years later Bulgarian Christians residing close to the border took over land in the village of Tımraş (Ottoman territory) on the grounds that it fell within their side of the border and came to blows (*muzarebe*) with its residents.¹⁵ In these incidents the aggressors invariably justified their actions with the claim that the other side owed taxes. Considering the newly demarcated lines, there may have been some confusion about paying taxes accrued before the unification. But these acts were also an example of rather desperate local efforts to modify global political configurations.

newer “threat” of Jews appeared stronger than the known one of Muslims, who were already politically, socially, and culturally weakened by the end of direct Ottoman rule. In short, I suspect that part of his fear of the continuous Muslim emigration was prompted by his anti-Semitism.

¹³ *Izlozhenie St.-Zagorskii okr. upravitel ... 1894-95 godina*, 13.

¹⁴ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 145, l. 33, 34.

¹⁵ BOA, Y. PRK. BŞK 39/16.

Meanwhile, Bulgarian central and provincial administrators persistently demanded that the Ottoman government compel negligent and indebted Muslim peasants to pay outstanding taxes to the principality. For instance, the Plovdiv governor requested that the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency in Istanbul demand compensation for the incident at the “Duliata,” including tithe payment by Breze. The Ottoman Ministry of Interior responded that it was not clear who needed compensation since it had not been established who inflicted damage upon whom.¹⁶ In a broader sense this was a valid point. The new political border affected negatively both Breze and Vŭrbovo because access to “Duliata” as well as making a living from agriculture became implicated with recognizing either fledgling imperial sovereignty or emergent national bids to sovereignty.

For the government of the Principality of Bulgaria the question of outstanding Muslim tax payments was both a financial concern and a political issue. Provincial authorities in particular feared that Turkish Muslims who sold land to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire proper also concealed unpaid land taxes and outstanding debts to agricultural credit-cooperatives (*zemedelski kasi*). The problem of unpaid loans and taxes was serious, especially for part of the Rhodope region of former Eastern Rumelia, which had been ceded to the Ottoman Empire after the 1885 union.¹⁷ For example, twenty-five Turkish Muslim villagers from the Kŭrdzhali district (after 1885 in Ottoman territory) had taken 18,400 *kurush* in loans from the Haskovo agricultural credit-cooperative, which remained in Bulgarian territory. In the fall of 1886 the Bulgarian diplomatic agency in Istanbul requested assistance in collecting the sum and the accumulated interest from the villagers. But in 1889 the villagers asked the governor of the Ottoman province of Edirne (to which Kŭrdzhali was appended) to request postponement until the following harvest; there is no evidence that they ever paid.¹⁸ The Bulgarian Ministry of Finance urged the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency in Istanbul to do all in its power to convince the Ottoman authorities to help collect taxes that Turkish Muslims living along the border owed to the principality.¹⁹ The agency tried to enlist the support of the Ottoman government, which responded with a similar request for Bulgarian Christian landowners in Ottoman territory and insisted that Muslims did pay taxes whereas Christians did not.²⁰

¹⁶ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 145, l. 33, 34, 35, 51, 53.

¹⁷ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 11, l. 44, 45.

¹⁸ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 14, l. 3, 41, 45.

¹⁹ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 394, l. 4.

²⁰ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 14, l. 45; a. e. 394, l. 1, 2.

Seeing the futility of these types of diplomatic exchanges, the Bulgarian Minister of Trade and Agriculture stressed in 1895 that the minister of justice should order district judges and notaries not to let Muslims sell land and emigrate if they had outstanding debts to the agricultural credit-cooperatives. Heeding this warning, the minister of justice issued an order prohibiting notaries from finalizing land sales unless the seller presented written proof from the nearest agricultural credit-cooperative that s/he had paid off all debts. The minister of finance complained to the minister of justice that occasionally the debts of the seller exceeded the price of the plots for sale. Both ministries put provincial financial inspectors to work in the effort to ensure the stability of the treasury; their rather ambitious task was to find out how much land tax had been imposed on each plot for sale and whether payments had been made.²¹ An unfortunate consequence of this policy was that it cast doubt on the very procedure of land sales involving Muslims, perhaps inadvertently challenging their ownership status altogether.²²

MUSLIM LAND FOR SOUTHERN BULGARIA

The unification increased substantially the Muslim population of the Principality of Bulgaria, forcing statesmen to rethink the emerging national framework and to give account, unwillingly, to the Porte for Muslim grievances that frequently resulted in emigration. In addition, the principality's governments resented that they had to continue paying the annual Eastern Rumelian tribute to the imperial government. And this came on top of strained finances due to the war with Serbia which accompanied the 1885 unification. Confronted with these financial difficulties Bulgarian governments charted a path for economic development and state building, which relied on procuring foreign loans for industrialization and modernizing agriculture—the largest sector in the economy—so as to “catch up” with Europe (as will be discussed in the following chapter).²³ This twofold strategy engaged Bulgarian Christians and Turkish- and Slavic-speaking

²¹ TsDIA, f. 242k, op. 1, a. e. 151, l. 1, 2, 3, 6, 74, 75.

²² TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 190, l. 237–43.

²³ Dobrin Michev, “Razvitiето na kapitalizma v Bulgariia (1885–1894) i ikonomicheskata politika na Stamboloviia rezhim,” in *Vŭtreshnata politika na Bulgariia prez kapitalizma 1878–1944*, ed. Iono Mitev (Sofia: BAN, Institut za Istoriia, 1980), 24–25.

Muslims (Pomaks)—the most numerous population groups—in substantially different ways. In official discourse Muslims became synonymous with backwardness while the male Bulgarian Christian proprietor carried the potential for progress. Lands associated with Muslims became important to the economy of the principality as modernizing agriculture entailed land consolidation, bringing new lands under cultivation, and diversification, all of which threatened Muslim landownership.

The unification reopened the post–Russo-Ottoman War question of what should be done with lands sold or abandoned by emigrating Muslims. Three years after the unification, the Ministry of Finance of the new polity delegated special commissions in the territory of former Eastern Rumelia “to make state property known” as soon as possible; such property was usually characterized as “property of nonrepatriated Turks.”²⁴ In the countryside this definition implied mostly *mahlul* land, i.e., vacant land with unclear ownership. Following Ottoman law and practice, the Provisional Russian Administration as well as the administration of Eastern Rumelia and the government of the Principality of Bulgaria had treated *mahlul* lands as belonging to the state. The special commissions in post-unification Bulgaria actually employed the Ottoman land tenure category of *mahlul* as a way to prevent sale transactions among Muslim emigrants and local Muslims. This was so because central and provincial financial authorities aimed to lease profitably lands that were classified as *mahlul*. Moreover, putting such lands under the purview of the Bulgarian state apparatus also helped integrate Eastern Rumelia administratively into the principality thus making the 1885 unification irreversible even though Prince Ferdinand lacked international recognition.

The efforts of the special commissions to discover *mahlul* land and streamline its exploitation fit with broader goals for modernizing agriculture which, while threatening Muslim landownership, also pitted state authorities against Bulgarian Christian peasants. Village mayors, provincial financial inspectors, and other local officials had their own plans for profiting (sometimes personally) from *mahlul* land without involving the central government.²⁵ A lengthy report by the governor of Stara Zagora to the Ministry of Finance (dated 1888) criticized the heads of districts for neglecting their duty to lease the property of Muslim emigrants thereby

²⁴ TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 155, l. 12; f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 128, l. 1.

²⁵ TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 110, l. 30 through 40; a. e. 113, l. 13, 14; a. e. 146, l. 16, 17.

"inflicting huge financial damage to the treasury of the state." He dismissed complaints about understaffing and accused the district head of obstruction.²⁶ The governor of Plovdiv explicitly blamed village mayors for illegal appropriations of land under the pretext of municipal needs.²⁷ These tensions among different levels of the administration as well as the schemes of individual crafty officials disclose administrative ignorance, malpractice, and corruption, all of which, as contemporaries testified, were common in real estate.²⁸ For instance, opponents of Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov charged him with profiting handsomely from illicit property transactions involving the lands of Muslims in the Black Sea region of Burgas city.²⁹ Beyond corruption these types of accusations expose the priorities of postunification statesmen: stable tax flow from agriculture, which involved maximizing revenue from landholdings associated with Muslims as well as the further dismantling of vestiges of the Ottoman order.

During the years 1888 and 1889, for example, the special commission in the Stara Zagora province (formerly part of Eastern Rumelia) refused to recognize the sale transaction between the Turkish Muslims Halil Hacı Mehmedov (a resident of the village of Alexandrovo) and Panta Ismail Osmanov, who had fled after the 1885 unification and not returned to Alexandrovo. He and Mehmedov apparently finalized the sale without Osmanov ever going back to the village. The conflict between Mehmedov and the special commission arose when the actual sale was completed. In his petition to Prince Ferdinand (May 1889), Halil Hacı Mehmedov asked for help with the land he had bought "with [his] poverty." The commission claimed that it had declared Osmanov's land as *mahlul* a year before Mehmedov bought it. Apparently Mehmedov presented the special commission with documentation testifying to his ownership, but the commission did not recognize the document as authentic. At this point the Ministry of Finance became involved; it accepted the judgment of the commission that Mehmedov's documents were not reliable, without pro-

²⁶ TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 128, l. 3, 4.

²⁷ *Doklad na Plovdivskii okr. upravitel za obshtoto sŭstoianie na okruga prez g. 1887–88* (Plovdiv: Kh. Genadiev, 1888).

²⁸ Iliev, *Spomeni*, passim; Michev "Razvitiето na kapitalizma v Bulgariia (1885–1894)," 21–22; Elena Statelova and Radoslav Popov, eds., *Stefan Stambolov i negovoto vreme: nepublikuvani spomeni* (Sofia: IK "Detelina 6," 1993), 59–91.

²⁹ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 143–61; Statelova et al., *Stefan Stambolov*, 91–130; Ivan Salabashev, *Spomeni* (Sofia: Knipegraf, 1943), 86–91, 124–29.

viding details, but was willing to recognize Mehmedov as owner if he presented proper documentation.³⁰

The problem in Mehmedov's case was less the absence of ostensibly valid documentation than the issue that the seller had emigrated. It was emigration that enabled the special commissions as well as central and local authorities to use the *mahlul* category to serve particular interests. For financial reasons as well as to protect their legitimacy in the eyes of Bulgarian Christian peasants, local authorities were quite reluctant to break leasing arrangements so as to satisfy the land claims of Muslims, who had either left during the 1885 unification and subsequently returned or had returned to unified Bulgaria for the first time after their 1877–78 flight. When Issa Deli Alioğlu went back to his home in the village of Korten (Burgas province) sometime in 1886, he both failed to assert his ownership status as well as to collect 209 gold *kurush* of rent accrued to him.³¹ His plots had been leased and neither the Burgas authorities nor the Ministry of Finance in Sofia was prepared to pay Issa Deli Alioğlu the rent he claimed.³² In another case involving emigration, the Stara Zagora provincial authorities declared Mehmed Sakoğlu Smailov's lands in 1888 as *mahlul* and proceeded to lease them to the Bulgarian Nono Petkov (who incidentally had fought in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78). When Smailov protested, the Ministry of Finance explained that he had not claimed the lands within the time frame provided by the Ottoman Land Code and that the Muslim population had not been able to prove that Smailov was alive.³³

Someone must have complained to the Ottoman envoy in the principality or written to the government in Istanbul, because the Bulgarian Trade Agent³⁴ in Ottoman Edirne was on the defensive. He argued that Turkish Muslims who wished to emigrate from Bulgaria were facilitated legally in every way. But nothing could be done for Turkish Muslims who had fled during the Russo-Ottoman War and then tried to go back to sell their property many years after because the property had by then been declared vacant. To underscore the fairness with which Muslims were treated in Bulgaria, the agent pointed out that Bulgarian Christians who

³⁰ TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 155, l. 11, 12, 13.

³¹ TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 109, l. 70–76.

³² TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 190, l. 272–82.

³³ TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 240, l. 49, 51–54.

³⁴ Trade agencies were equivalent to consulates until the Principality of Bulgaria proclaimed independence in 1908.

emigrated from the Ottoman Empire sold plots to Turkish Muslims at the price they had originally bought them and covered all expenses connected with the purchase. Such onerous emigration procedure, according to the agent, was not required by Ottoman law, and treated Muslims preferentially.³⁵ Here reemerges the familiar standard for sovereignty which the Great Powers had set for the Tanzimat empire and which the empire and its successor states used against each other: good government and state worthy of international recognition were those that guaranteed justice for Christians and Muslims alike. In the case of Ottoman–Bulgarian relations doing things right amounted to pointing the flaws of the other.

Occasionally, Turkish Muslims overturned the expertise of the Bulgarian authorities by presenting land knowledge procured from the imperial government in Istanbul. For instance, several Turkish Muslim residents of the village Turski Konush (Plovdiv province) presented officials with Ottoman title deeds for wood groves totaling 2,480 *uvrats* and requested from the notary to register individual ownership. Both district and Finance Ministry officials noted signs of tempering with the documents and suspected that the title deeds had been falsified. In 1888 the Finance Ministry asked the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency in Istanbul to verify the title deeds, suggesting that they may have belonged to the Turkish Muslims of Turski Konush who had emigrated from the Principality of Bulgaria. In any case the ministry maintained that the wood groves used to be communal property even in the Ottoman Empire. At stake, the Finance Ministry argued, were both state interests as well as those of the Bulgarian Christian residents of the neighboring village Bŭlgarski Konush. In 1890 the Ottoman Office of Records verified the title deeds and the Plovdiv authorities honored the claims of the villagers.³⁶ In another case the Turkish Muslim Mustafafov family from the district of Burgas even sued the provincial governor in 1893 for confiscating their arable plots. Two years later the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs recognized the confirmation from Istanbul that the title deeds in possession of the Mustafafov family were indeed authentic. This success story, however, should not detract us from the fact that the entire legal process had begun because the Burgas governor had inexplicably decided that the title deeds were fictitious.³⁷ The fact that Bulgarian officials were ready to temper their suspicion of Muslim ownership

³⁵ TsDIA, f. 176k, op. 1, a. e. 1738, l. 8–11.

³⁶ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 300, l. 1, 30.

³⁷ TsDIA, f. 242k, op. 1, a. e. 50, l. 1–15. For a similar case, though, without a happy end, see TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 240, l. 52.

in former Eastern Rumelia is worth noting. It is in contrast with the less compromising position of the Bulgarian Trade Agent discussed earlier.

This vacillation can be explained with the precarious position of the vassal principality vis-à-vis the suzerain empire. First, until 1896 Prince Ferdinand was not recognized internationally and diplomatic relations with Russia were severed. Second, thus lacking in a Great Power patron, Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov worked for good relations with Istanbul. This meant flexibility as well as efforts to dress measures that affected Muslims in legality. Equally important was the suppression of militant, nationalist Christian groups that planned a revolution to achieve the independence of Ottoman Macedonia or its incorporation into the principality. Such agitation had only grown since the unification of province and principality, which, Turkish Muslims routinely complained to the Porte, endangered their properties and their lives. These grievances increased after Stambolov fell from power in 1894 and his successors, under the tutelage of Prince Ferdinand, abandoned the policy of clamping down on revolutionary activities.

Hence official efforts to claim ostensibly vacant landed estates (*çiftliks*) or arable lands in endowments (*vakıfs*) involved protracted legal-diplomatic procedures. They simultaneously restrained Bulgarian governments while enabling them to develop methods for extracting profit at the expense of Turkish Muslims. In this process, they were construed as a vestige community from the imperial past which withheld valuable resources needed for Bulgaria to progress. Let me now illustrate this point with a sustained analysis of archival documents that reveal how governmental efforts to extract capital from Turkish Muslim landed properties supported the transformation of Eastern Rumelia into southern Bulgaria.

In September 1890 the Finance Ministry sent the government attorney, S. P. Radanov, to Istanbul to obtain documents from the Ottoman Office of Records which would help the Bulgarian government prove the *mahlul* status of some *çiftliks* in former Eastern Rumelia. Radanov suspected that in the mid-1860s the Ottoman government had settled Tatar and Caucasian Muslim mountaineer refugees from Russia on *mahlul* lands. He looked for title deeds and for *hududnames*, i.e., documents describing the boundaries of villages. Radanov also wanted to know whether the Ottoman government had classified the properties as state owned.³⁸ Clearly he was looking for ways to build a case for appropriation

³⁸ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 387, l. 2, 4, 5, 6, 16.

by the Bulgarian government. Three years earlier the Finance Ministry had dispatched a private lawyer to Istanbul to procure documents regarding *çiftliks* in the Burgas district. He was recalled, however, and Radanov, with the help of the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency in Istanbul, picked up the work. Radanov spent about a year in Istanbul. Thus, from 1887 through 1896 the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency, the Ministry of Finance, and the Plovdiv provincial and the Burgas district authorities took steps to prove the vacant status of several *çiftliks* in the territory of former Eastern Rumelia as well as of lands included in *vakıfs*.³⁹ The Ministry of Finance, which was in charge of state and public properties, planned to sue Turkish Muslims over the ownership of several *çiftliks*.⁴⁰ Claiming monopoly over *çiftlik* and *vakıf* land and revenue was a complicated endeavor that lasted until the proclamation of independence in 1908 and was not always successful. The experience, though, prepared the ground for much more assertive actions in this domain after 1908.

Sometimes central and provincial authorities simply alienated *çiftlik* properties of Turkish Muslims who were deceased or had emigrated, claiming this was necessary for infrastructure projects. This is what happened with the properties of the deceased Fehim Pasha in the Anhalo area (along the Black Sea coast, Burgas district). Military barracks were built on his land and he was supposed to be compensated with 200 gold Turkish *lira*. Meanwhile, Fehim Pasha died and in 1891 his brother Dervish Pasha, who lived in Istanbul, employed a representative to seek compensation from the municipality. Dervish Pasha also authorized his representative to sell the remaining properties to the Burgas municipality as well as to collect any outstanding rent.⁴¹ Dervish Pasha used to be an adjutant to Sultan Abdülhamid II and perhaps for this reason the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry and the Diplomatic Agency responded quickly. They found out that Fehim Pasha had apparently already sold some of his lands, that some of his lessees had brought up a court case against him, and that there were also outstanding taxes. Nonetheless, Dervish Pasha's representative sold lands to the Burgas municipality though he seems not to have received the 200 gold *lira* and there is no mention of collected rent (possibly it was deducted from owed taxes).⁴²

³⁹ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 165 consists of 106 pages of correspondence.

⁴⁰ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 165, l. 51, 53.

⁴¹ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 305, l. 3, 4.

⁴² Ibid., l. 6–9.

Many cases of land appropriation, however, were not settled that easily if at all, particularly when Turkish Muslim owners were not interested in selling agricultural lands to the Bulgarian state. Such cases again involved *çiftliks* often in the region of the Black Sea coastal city of Burgas. Mahmud Damad Pasha who was one of Sultan Abdülhamid II's in-laws and a Young Turk living in exile,⁴³ owned landed estates in the villages of Troianovtsi and Mehmed Köy (Burgas district) but lived with his family in Paris. The pasha had left his properties to the care of a Burgas attorney named Dr. Totev who, according to the Ministry of Finance, had not paid any taxes on that property as of 1903. Back in 1897 the Burgas district court had issued a sequestration order on account of nonpayment and authorized the sale of the landed properties. Until 1901 the Burgas district had set up two auctions for the plots in the Troianovtsi village, but no buyers showed up. Potential buyers may have feared some kind of retribution from Totev. Or, perhaps more likely, they may have known that some Troianovtsi villagers had already bought over 2,000 ares in arable plots for 1,700 gold Napoleons but were not issued title deeds since the seller owed taxes.⁴⁴

The Finance Ministry significantly refused to take over the *çiftliks* as state property, preferring instead to pursue the collection of the evaded taxes that amounted approximately to 30,000 Bulgarian *levs*. Probably the value of the plots and the expenses associated with conducting auctions amounted to less than the outstanding taxes. Also, cash was more useful as it could be invested in whatever economic goals the government deemed worth pursuing. Clearly it valued capital more than taking over land and then spending resources on arranging the legalities of ownership.

Mahmud Damad Pasha died in Paris in 1902 and his heirs apparently went to Burgas with the intent of selling his estates. They left in a haste because at that time nationalist armed bands (*cheti*) fighting for independent Macedonia traveled between Burgas and Ottoman Edirne, creating much insecurity and escalating tensions between the principality and the empire to such a degree that rumors of an impending war circulated widely. Meanwhile, the Burgas chief of finance suggested to the Ministry of Finance either directly to appropriate the *çiftlik* or to forward to the Burgas authorities official confirmation of Mahmud Damad Pasha's death from the Bulgarian diplomatic agencies in Paris and Istanbul. This would have enabled the Burgas chief of finance to declare the

⁴³ Methodieva, "Reform, Politics, and Culture," 129.

⁴⁴ TsDIA, f. 176k, op. 1, a. e. 1864, l. 15, 17.

lands as legally belonging to the government. This was no small affair since the deceased Pasha and his sister Ayşe Sadika jointly owned close to 30,000 ares in arable plots, pastures, and wood groves whose estimated value totaled 138,300 Bulgarian *levs*. The Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs suggested that the government should act as guardian of the landed properties, presumably leasing them, until they could be sold.⁴⁵ De facto, though, ownership of land and capital was transferred to the Bulgarian state.

Property questions proved complicated for the Ministry of Finance even when they did not involve Turkish Muslims who were related—closely or remotely—to the Ottoman palace. A case in point was the Karagözler *çiftlik* in the Burgas district whose master, Süleyman Beğ, had died and his heirs had immigrated to the Ottoman Empire proper. In late spring 1889 the government attorney for the Plovdiv province, S. P. Radanov, sent a legal brief to the Finance Ministry in which he proposed the following strategy for appropriation: look for documentation in the relevant Ottoman offices which would show that there had been an ownership dispute between Süleyman Beğ’s heirs and the Ottoman government before the Russo-Ottoman War. Radanov hoped to find out that the estate had been classified as state property by the Porte. Such a classification would enable swift appropriation by the Bulgarian government.⁴⁶ Süleyman Beğ, according to the Ministry of Finance, had purchased 400 *uvrats* of land in the mid-1850s but gradually misappropriated more. Thus, his heirs claimed properties that had never belonged to him legally.

Initial correspondence with the Ottoman Office of Records seemed to corroborate the claims of the Bulgarian authorities since no record of Süleyman Beğ’s title deed was discovered. This was not unusual as the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency in Istanbul found out time and again.⁴⁷ One reason was that administrative divisions in the principality differed from those in the Ottoman Empire, so the same village could be in different districts in empire and principality.⁴⁸ Or a particular plot of land in the Ottoman Empire was registered and then the record was filed based on the plot’s classification as state (*mirî*), freehold (*mülk*), or endowment (*vakıf*) property. The Bulgarian authorities did not always know how a plot was classified or the classification had changed due to sale. Hence the process

⁴⁵ Ibid., l. 17a, 18.

⁴⁶ TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 146, l. 153–55.

⁴⁷ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 165, l. 2, 69, 70, 83–100; a. e. 321, l. 16, 33.

⁴⁸ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 165, l. 16.

of obtaining ownership records was sometimes delayed until such issues were addressed.⁴⁹

Six years after the correspondence on the Karagözler *çiftlik* was begun, the Ministry of Finance received a testimony from the former assistant judge in the Burgas district, Mehmed Hüseyin Ferid. He explained that in 1876 the Ottoman Interior Ministry official Osman Nuri Efendi had been dispatched to Burgas to declare the Karagözler *çiftlik* as vacant and to claim it for the Ottoman treasury. But once he arrived to Burgas, Osman Nuri Efendi found out that the *çiftlik* was not vacant, that part of it had been registered as *vakıf*, and hence there was no reason to declare it state property. Osman Nuri Efendi apparently left his report with the Burgas city authorities and fled to Istanbul because by then the Russo-Ottoman War had broken out. He died in 1889 and thus could not be summoned to testify.⁵⁰

The Finance Ministry continued pursuing documents relentlessly but as late as May 1897 no record had been found in the various Ottoman government agencies. Feeling no pressure to speed up the process, the Ottoman Office of Records suggested that it should be discovered to which *vakıf* a part of the *çiftlik* supposedly belonged and then a new search could be initiated. From Istanbul's perspective stalling was a risk-free way to assert imperial sovereignty. The Ottoman Finance Ministry explained that before the Russo-Ottoman War the secretary of the Evkaf Ministry had seen a receipt for the issuance of a title deed to one of Süleyman Beğ's heirs. So, nothing was conclusive, and the Bulgarian government was losing patience. This was an important issue for them because, according to the Finance Ministry, the Karagözler *çiftlik*'s estimated value—sale and tax revenue combined—was 257,280 *levs*.⁵¹ However, if no ownership documents were discovered, then the government attorney Radanov could make the case that the estate was vacant and transfer it to the state. As in the previous case, this property affair dragged on until the independence proclamation in 1908.

This somewhat cautious political-legal strategy was gradually undermined by Konstantin Stoilov, who replaced Stefan Stambolov as prime minister in 1894. Stoilov's open support for nationalist factions aspiring for Macedonia's incorporation into the principality did not bring the gov-

⁴⁹ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 300, l. 100.

⁵⁰ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 165, l. 86, 87. He was apparently also known as Sarhoş (drunk) Osman Nuri Efendi.

⁵¹ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 165, l. 92, 98, 101, 103.

ernment closer to its goal of taking over large estates. It also worsened the condition of Muslims in southern Bulgaria.⁵² Beginning with Stoilov's cabinet, the principality became implicated with one such militant nationalist group, the Supreme Committee (known also as the Supremacists). Stoilov in fact met with its leader, Traiko Kitanchev, and encouraged the plans and preparations for an uprising in Macedonia.⁵³ Consequently, violence in the southern Bulgarian countryside became the norm as Bulgarian Christian bands (*cheti*) traversed the Ottoman–Bulgarian border and attacked Muslims to revenge for Ottoman campaigns against the *cheti* and their supporters. Agricultural vandalism became a weapon of attack and defense, which undermined the status of Muslims as citizens of the Bulgarian principality.

The Ottoman grand vizier protested to the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry about the killing of Muslims in different places in southern Bulgaria. In turn the Interior Ministry explained in length the circumstances leading to the deaths of some Muslims. It invariably stressed the ordinary criminal nature of the acts, pointed out the Muslim perpetrators so as to dispel any suspicion that ethno-religious antagonisms were to blame, and then denied the grand vizier's claims that Christians from Ottoman Macedonia were the culprits.⁵⁴ *The Times'* correspondent, James Boucher, reported in the mid-1890s about various acts of intimidation and violence which Bulgarians as well as local authorities perpetrated against Muslims.⁵⁵ In mid-1895, armed bands (probably approximately 800 men) sponsored by the Supreme Committee crossed from Bulgaria into the Ottoman Macedonian provinces as well as into the province of Edirne. In the summer of 1895 the villages of Yanaklı and Dospat in the district of Robçoz, province of Edirne, got torched by some of these military bands. Many of their Muslim inhabitants and working animals died, and agricultural produce was destroyed.⁵⁶ According to Ottoman calculations, in Yanaklı alone 287 houses were completely destroyed; in Dospat there were people who

⁵² Duncan M. Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movements, 1893–1903* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 32–35; see also the diary of the Bulgarian exarch on the involvement of Bulgarian governments in the struggle for Macedonia: Bŭlgarski Ekzarkh Iosif I, *Dnevnik* (Sofia: Universitetsko Izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Okhridski," 1992).

⁵³ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 42–47.

⁵⁴ TsDIA, f. 176k, op. 1, a. e. 870, l. 9, 10.

⁵⁵ Ibid., l. 4, 21.

⁵⁶ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 13/4, s. 2, 3, 8, 24-1, 24-2, 24-3; BOA, İ.B. 1131.

burned to death in their houses.⁵⁷ Stoio Kostov from the town of Dupnitsa and Todor Dimitrov from a village by Dupnitsa led the band that devastated Yanaklı.⁵⁸ The Porte's complaints about the torching of Yanaklı and Dospat and the demands for compensations fell on deaf ears. The two men were briefly put under house arrest but were never tried and found guilty of a crime.⁵⁹

This incident was symptomatic of an emerging political dynamic between Sofia and Istanbul. Nationalist fighters mobilized—with coercion and violence—Christian Macedonians and terrorized Muslim Macedonians while the Porte retaliated with investigations, arrests, exiles and executions.⁶⁰ Foreign newspaper correspondents, journalists, consuls, scholars, and humanitarian activists regularly wrote about the escalation of violence in the region.⁶¹ Some were supportive of the nationalist revolutionaries.⁶² Most condemned the brutal actions of revolutionaries and blamed Ottoman misrule and cruelty,⁶³ the cynicism of the Great Powers in maintaining the status quo, or the irredentist nationalisms of the post-Ottoman Balkan states.⁶⁴ The escalation of violence turned the Ottoman–Bulgarian border into a zone of guerilla warfare in which villagers and agriculture suffered tremendously. In August 1903 the simmering violence exploded into the Ilinden Uprising, led by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), which was based in the empire. The Ottoman army as well as irregular troops suppressed the insurrection quite brutally while the guerillas exacted heavy toll on the civilian population as they pulled out.⁶⁵ In exchange for preserving its territorial integrity the Ottoman Empire committed to yet more reforms under Austrian and

⁵⁷ BOA, A. MTZ. RŞ 13/4, s. 11, 24-1.

⁵⁸ TsDIA, f. 242k, op. 1, a. e. 127, l. 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid., l. 6, 15.

⁶⁰ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, passim, and İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), passim.

⁶¹ See Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, passim.

⁶² Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties*, 34n60, 224. See also Albert Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit: A Californian in the Balkan Wars* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007) in which Sonnichsen described his adventures in Macedonia.

⁶³ See Henry Noel Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906).

⁶⁴ E. J. Dillon, “The Reign of Terror in Macedonia,” *Contemporary Review* 83 (January/June 1903): 305–19.

⁶⁵ Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties*, 35; Fikret Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu Oluşumu ve 1908’e Kadar Gelişimi*, trans. İhsan Catay (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı), 201–4.

Russian leadership, the so-called Mürzsteg Program.⁶⁶ Just a year before the outbreak of the Ilinden Uprising, the Ottoman Commissariat in Sofia had protested against the harassment of Muslims in villages in the Plovdiv district. Turkish Muslims from several villages had written to the commissariat to complain that the authorities were pressuring Muslim peasants to sell their lands cheaply and emigrate from the principality. The petitioners pleaded with the commissariat to protect their lives and properties.⁶⁷ The Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs took care to explain that these incidents of violence were isolated and often perpetrated by criminals who were apprehended, thus denying the existence of basically ethno-religious terrorism.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, statesmen were becoming increasingly occupied with Bulgaria's image abroad which hinged on how the Great Powers evaluated the principality's governance of Muslims. The irony was probably not lost on Ottoman statesmen who had to counter their image as uncivilized in the aftermath of the April Uprising and as incompetent rulers of Christians in Ottoman Macedonia. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry sent dry reports to the Bulgarian Agency in Istanbul describing specific instances of Macedonian revolutionaries as well as Bulgarian gendarmes beating, robbing, and murdering Muslims in the principality. The office of the Ottoman Turkish language newspaper *Muvazene*, published in Plovdiv, was set on fire once by adherents of the Supreme Committee.⁶⁹ According to grievors as well as the Porte, the Bulgarian authorities did not protect the lives and properties of their Muslim subjects.⁷⁰ Reports about Muslim harassment in Bulgaria circulated both in the empire and in Europe, provoking consternation among Bulgarian politicians. This was especially the case after the Ilinden Uprising when the violent nationalism of Christian Slavs in Macedonia horrified Turkish and Albanian Muslims, thereby severely undermining Bulgarian territorial bids to this heterogeneous region. One Ottoman Turkish language newspaper in Macedonia noted that the activities of non-Turks in Macedonia “were always against the Turks.”⁷¹ To salvage face, but also to mollify the Porte with whom ten-

⁶⁶ Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties*, 36.

⁶⁷ TsDIA, f. 176k, op. 1, a. e. 1738, l. 1, 4, 21.

⁶⁸ TsDIA, f. 176k, op. 1, a. e. 738, l. 31, 32.

⁶⁹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 74.

⁷⁰ TsDIA, f. 176k, op. 1, a. e. 1738, l. 33.

⁷¹ Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 40.

sions frequently provoked fears or rumors of impending war, the Bulgarian authorities tried to spread propaganda in Macedonia about how well Muslims lived in Bulgaria.⁷² Articulating this narrative remained important even after the 1909 international recognition of Bulgarian independence for a couple of reasons: 1) Bulgaria had territorial claims in Macedonia and Thrace, and 2) the government wished to protect Bulgarian Christians in the Ottoman Empire from reprisals. But even before 1909, as we will see in the next chapter, maintaining the narrative of good Muslim life served the country's image as a civilized state while it embarked on a tumultuous path of modernization that pitted Muslims against Christians.

VAKIFS: COMMUNAL PROPERTY AND SOVEREIGNTY

Vakıfs were as important as *çiftliks* in the administrative and economic integration of Eastern Rumelia into the Principality of Bulgaria. Likewise, in creating administrative and legal measures for *vakıfs*, statesmen compelled Muslims to accept Sofia, rather than Istanbul, as the ultimate seat of authority. Managing *vakıfs*, though, involved more than extracting economic and political capital for Bulgarian state building. They served a variety of religious, educational, cultural, and economic needs of the Muslim population in post-Ottoman Bulgaria. Hence almost any regulation concerning *vakıfs* quite directly shaped the social and legal status of Muslims, gradually imposing on them a particular ethno-religious framework of governance, which reinforced Bulgarian claims to sovereignty.

Vakıfs, as we may recall, challenged the autonomy of Eastern Rumelia's administration because *vakıf* trustees (*mütevellıs*) demanded portions of the tithe and the land tax as part of their payment for maintaining a specific endowment. Most provincial officials disliked, sabotaged, but partially obliged these demands while also allowing the sale of *vakıf* landed properties to Bulgarian Christians. In the post-1885 principality *vakıfs* became a thorny issue again as the Ministry of Finance and Bulgarian governments more generally refused to allocate a portion of taxes from endowment properties to the trustees, insisting that this was a state matter not a private issue. In 1888 several *mütevellıs* from southern Bul-

⁷² See Milena B. Methodieva, "How Turks and Bulgarians Became Ethnic Brothers: History, Propaganda, and Political Alliances on the Eve of the Young Turk Revolution," *Turkish Historical Review* 5 (2014): 221–62.

garia wrote to the “Islamic community [*obshtina*] of Eastern Rumelia” as well as to the grand vizier to complain that they had not received a dime since the unification.⁷³ Their situation was the rule rather than the exception.⁷⁴ Unlike Eastern Rumelian administrators, Bulgarian officials did not attempt to pursue a middle course by paying at least some portion of tax revenue to the trustees. In the unified principality, the Ministry of Finance was resolved on supervising all revenue connected with the *vakıfs*, including the sale of endowment properties. It set a special commission in 1889, known as the Tevliyet Commission, that is, a temporary unit within the Ministry of Finance which dealt with the office of the trustee of an endowment, the *tevliyet*.

The Tevliyet Commission evaluated the actions of trustees and decided on their monetary claims. *Mütevellis* from former Eastern Rumelia appealed to the commission for payment of a portion of taxes and rent accrued from *vakıf* properties. For example, the commission reviewed petitions by the trustees of the endowments “İsmail Bey,”⁷⁵ “Umur Beğ” and “Saruca Pasha.”⁷⁶ They lamented the fact that they could not fulfill their basic duties, such as repairing *vakıf* buildings like mosques and public water fountains due to lack of funds. In both cases the commission ruled that the tithe in the principality was a state revenue that could only be used for state expenditures and not for the benefit of private individuals. The commission then decided that it was up to the Bulgarian government to decide how to maintain mosques and other endowment structures. In the case of the “Umur Beğ” and “Saruca Pasha” *vakıfs*, the commission also mandated that the government should lease the endowment shops, market booth, and oven. A portion of that income could be used to maintain the mosque as well as to pay the imam two Bulgarian *levs* per diem. “Empty” *vakıf* properties were to be sold at an auction and the proceeds deposited in the state treasury.

These interventionist actions were reminiscent of the measures taken by Ottoman governments since the Tanzimat, which aimed at regulating and profiting from the *vakıfs*. Postunification governments went further than Eastern Rumelia by centralizing the management of endowments in the Ministries of Finance and Foreign and Confessional Affairs, even to the detriment of individual Christian smallholders who used to

⁷³ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 158, l. 42–45.

⁷⁴ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 38, l. 100–41; a. e. 39, l. 53–66.

⁷⁵ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 38, l. 120, 123, 124.

⁷⁶ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 39, l. 54.

be so important to the provincial administration. A case in point is the “Karlzade Lala Ali Bey” *vakıf*. The commission annulled the sale of its pastures, arguing that the founding charter expressly banned the sale of *vakıf* properties. Then the commission recommended to the Ministry of Justice to forbid *mütevellîs* to sell *vakıf* properties because they did not own them. Brothers Khristo and Dimitŭr Lazarovi from the town of Karlovo who had bought the pastures of the “Karlzade Lala Ali Bey” *vakıf* sent a protest to the district court.⁷⁷ They may have been confused by the decision of the Tevliyet Commission since the Organic Statute of Eastern Rumelia provided for the transformation of *vakıf* properties into individual private property. Perhaps the commission was also influenced by the mayor of Karlovo, Mr. Puliev, who sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs in July 1888.⁷⁸ In it he urged the ministry to procure documents from Istanbul about the registration and boundaries of the pasture. Mayor Puliev contended that Süleyman Efendi, who was the *mütevellî* of the “Karlzade Lala Ali Bey” *vakıf*, had taken advantage of the chaos “in the latest dirty *bashibozuk* actions of the Turks during the latest uprisings” (probably referring to suppression of the April Uprising) and added to the “other properties he had also misappropriated from the Bulgarians our town pasture.”

In 1882 Süleyman Efendi had sold half of the pasture to the Lazarovi brothers and the then mayor had registered the purchase. He had done so because he was related to the Lazarovi, according to Puliev, even though the seller, Süleyman Efendi, had no valid Ottoman documents of ownership, just the verbal testimony of three witnesses. Apparently this was not the only case of contested ownership, because the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency received a letter from the Ottoman Ministry of Finance, which explained that all conflicts between private individuals and the town municipality over pastures, meadows, and wood groves should be settled with the knowledge provided by the Ottoman Office of Records. According to it, the entire town of Karlovo was registered as part of the “Karlzade Lala Ali Bey” *vakıf*. The note from the Office of Records made no mention of Puliev’s claim that Süleyman Efendi had misappropriated lands but indicated that the documents describing the boundaries of pastures, meadows, and wood groves were missing.⁷⁹ Clearly this information

⁷⁷ TsDIA, f. 158k, op. 1, a. e. 40, l. 114–16.

⁷⁸ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 113, l. 126, 127.

⁷⁹ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 113, l. 131.

did not change the decision of the Tevliyet Commission to treat that contested pasture, and likely others, as municipal, ultimately public property, thereby “restoring” it to the “rightful” owner, the Bulgarians writ large.

This emerging approach to *vakıf* lands as somehow public (Bulgarian) rather than private property was a useful tool for displacing imperial sovereignty while also redefining the meanings of individual ownership. A few years after the case discussed above (in 1893) the Plovdiv court annulled attorney Ivan Andonov’s purchase of a pasture and wood grove from the “Gazi Evrenos Beğ” *vakıf* that contained properties located both in the empire and the principality.⁸⁰ The court’s decision was based on the fact that Andonov had failed to provide any legitimate ownership document. Apparently Andonov had bought the lands in 1890 and went to register his title deed in 1893. The seller was a man named Petür Chakürov who used to manage the *vakıf* sheep herds that grazed on *vakıf* pastures spanning parts of the Ottoman western Aegean Sea hinterland as well as Eastern Rumelia. After the unification the border between empire and principality was no longer porous and this pastoral economy became unsustainable. Left without secure employment Chakürov probably tried to weather the changes by selling lands that he did not own. In 1895 the Ministry of Finance appropriated the “Gazi Evrenos Beğ” *vakıf* lands located in the principality because the *mütevelli* who was based in Ottoman Selanik had stopped paying taxes to the Bulgarian state. By 1904 the Plovdiv district authorities were already exploiting all *vakıf* pastures and wood groves as state properties. The Ottoman Interior Ministry persistently requested that the pastures and wood groves be entrusted to the care of the *mütevelli* but to no avail. The principality’s capability to override Eastern Rumelian and hence Ottoman regulations was clearly an assertion of power to the imperial suzerain. Equally importantly, gone was the relative permissiveness of the Eastern Rumelian authorities (see chapters 2 and 3) in allowing Bulgarian Christian cultivators to appropriate the plots of Muslims so as to shift the demographic balance and social capital in favor of the former.

The decisions of the Tevliyet Commission were not overturned even when claimants appealed to higher authorities in the principality or the empire because Bulgarian statesmen invariably tied *vakıf* disputes to the question of national sovereignty. For instance, Mehmed Beğ and Rağib

⁸⁰ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 118, l. 14–18, 35.

Beğ who were joint trustees of the “Gazi Mihal Beğ Zade” *vakıf*⁸¹ (Ihtiman district, Plovdiv province) met with Finance Minister Salabashev to demand 1,258 Ottoman *lira* from the *vakıf* revenue. Instead he offered 500 Ottoman *lira* in exchange for them giving up all rights to the *vakıf*, which they declined. The behavior of both parties is hardly surprising considering the fact that this endowment comprised the town of Ihtiman as well as ten villages and its estimated value was 90,000 gold *kurush*. Mehmed Beğ then appealed for help to the Ottoman Interior and Finance ministries. The Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency in Istanbul and the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs urged the Ministry of Finance to provide information about that case. In turn, the Ministry of Finance decided to hold a meeting to deal with the issue. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agent in Istanbul, Mr. Vŭlkovich, wrote to the Ottoman interior minister, Münir Pasha, that a special council at the Finance Ministry was investigating the issue. The Treaty of Berlin, Vŭlkovich then reminded Münir Pasha, stipulated that all *vakıf* questions in the Principality of Bulgaria should be addressed by a joint Ottoman–Bulgarian commission, which had not been formed until then. Vŭlkovich’s reminder was probably intended to undermine Ottoman backing of trustees’ requests. Mehmed Beğ continued applying pressure through the Ottoman Interior Ministry by emphasizing that he had received money until 1886 and that *vakıfs* in Eastern Rumelia differed from those in the principality. As of 1906 Mehmed Beğ’s request remained outstanding.

Simultaneously with making *mütevellıs* redundant or appropriating *vakıf* lands, the principality’s governments began developing guidelines for managing *vakıfs*, which evolved into legal-administrative regulations that differentiated citizenship obligations between Bulgarian Christians and Turkish Muslims. In September 1895 a special princely edict proclaimed the Temporary Regulations for the Religious Rule of Muslims and entrusted their application to the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs (henceforth Temporary Regulations).⁸² According to the Temporary Regulations (art. 14) a special municipal board (*nastoiatelstvo*) had to be set up in each city and village consisting of three to fifteen men (depending on population size) to administer “the mosques, medreses, and other Muslim pious and charitable establishments as well

⁸¹ My discussion of this dispute is based on TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 395, l. 6–14, 23–29, 31.

⁸² “Vremenni Pravila za dukhovnoto upravlenie na miusulmanite,” *Dŭrzhaven Vestnik*, no. 210, 26 September 1895.

as their properties." Presiding over a municipal board was a *müftü* or a deputy *müftü* or a board member especially appointed by a *müftü*. Each municipal board selected a treasurer among its members. The Temporary Regulations were new to Muslims of Eastern Rumelia-cum-southern Bulgaria. But they also represented a change for the principality's Muslims (pre-1885) in the sense that Muslims' religion and education was now regulated separately from those of Christians and Jews. This did not used to be so when the Liberal government of Dragan Tsankov promulgated the Temporary Regulations for the Religious Organization of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in 1880.⁸³ Then the Bulgarian Exarchate had protested both because it was leveled with the other religions as well as because its autonomy was infringed upon by the government.⁸⁴ Ultimately, both sets of regulations aimed at formalizing the relations between Muslim clerics and the Bulgarian authorities by subordinating the former to the latter so as to prevent influence by the Sheykh ul-Islam, the supreme religious authority in the Ottoman Empire. In the preunification principality, governments did not always follow the 1880 regulations thereby provoking diplomatic tensions with the Porte. For example, state officials meddled rather unceremoniously with the election of *müftüs*, even abolishing the post in Sofia due to Muslim emigration.⁸⁵

The 1895 Temporary Regulations were more detailed, reflecting an evolving state that tried to control its Muslim citizens not by cavalier abolition of posts but by careful monitoring. For example, *müftüs* could be elected only by adult Muslim male subjects of the principality (except Roma) who were literate, had a diploma from the Sheykh ul-Islam, and owned property. Their appointment was confirmed by the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs. *Müftüs* were subordinated to the chief *müftü* in the capital, Sofia, who in turn was appointed by the Bulgarian prince.⁸⁶ Municipal boards also had to be confirmed by the same ministry. Each board had to keep annual detailed financial records of all properties under its care and use any revenue only for their maintenance. Revenue accrued from *vakıfs* and certificates for personal matters like marriages

⁸³ "Ustav za dukhovното ustroistvo," chapter 2; "Privremenni Pravila za dukhovното ustroenie na khristiianite, na miusiulmanite, i evreite," *Dürzhaven Vestnik*, no. 56, 9 July 1880.

⁸⁴ Zhorzheta Nazürska, *Bülgarskata Dürzhava i Neimite Maltsinstva, 1879–1885* (Sofia: LIK, 1999), 14.

⁸⁵ Nazürska, *Bülgarskata Dürzhava*, 16–20.

⁸⁶ "Vremenni Pravila" (1895), articles 1–4, 20.

as well as donations. District financial officials were allowed to conduct surprise audits. All sales, exchanges, or purchase of immovable properties related to *vakıfs* required permission by the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs. All personnel working in the mosques and “other God-pleasing establishments” (read *vakıfs*) were appointed by *müftüs* who, in conjunction with the municipal boards, determined annual salaries.⁸⁷ Thus, without expressly mentioning or dealing with *vakıfs*, the Temporary Regulations de facto eliminated the position of the *mütevelli* and subordinated *vakıfs* to the municipal boards, thereby empowering the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs to oversee the operation of religious institutions. This administrative fiat essentially enabled the Ministry of Finance to frustrate *mütevellis* as well as the Ottoman agencies to which they appealed. The even broader significance of this measure, as we will see in the following chapters, was that the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs gradually expanded its *vakıf* oversight functions to nearly every aspect of Muslim public life.

The Temporary Regulations were a major step in claiming the resources of *vakıfs* while dismantling them as institutions that represented the imperial order. This became manifestly clear in July 1909 when the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs set up a special Administrative Commission to deal with the *müstesna* (exceptional) *vakıfs* in Bulgaria. It was created almost a year after the principality declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire. The terms of the commission were set by the Turkish–Bulgarian Protocol and Agreement on the Müftü Question (April 1909) which was signed when the Ottoman Empire recognized Bulgaria as an independent kingdom.⁸⁸

Let me first briefly discuss the events leading up to the independence proclamation so as to underscore the importance of *vakıfs* to Bulgarian assertions of sovereignty. The independence proclamation came during a very dramatic political change in the empire proper, the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908. The Young Turk revolutionaries had evolved from a loose assembly of secret committees dispersed in the empire to a tightly knit organization increasingly dominated by cultural Turkism and Turkish Muslim intellectuals, army officers, and bureaucrats. Their primary goal was to retain the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the empire, which they saw threatened by Abdülhamid II’s absolutism, Christian national-

⁸⁷ Ibid., articles 22–28.

⁸⁸ “Ukaz No. 20,” *Dürzhaven Vestnik* 13, 19 January 1910, article 2.

isms in the Balkans and Anatolia as well as Great Power intervention in Ottoman affairs.⁸⁹ Since the Great Powers accepted the regime change in the Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarian government immediately began hectic diplomatic activity to see if the situation could be used to obtain independence, and as in 1885, took the risk of proclaiming independence in September 1908 without having formal support by any Great Power. After a brief showdown of force in which both Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire began mobilizing, Great Britain, France, and Russia intervened to broker the beginning of negotiations. The resulting Turkish–Bulgarian Protocol, which recognized the declaration of independence, was the product of half a year of tense diplomacy and was signed by the Bulgarian and Ottoman foreign ministers, Mr. Liapchev and Rifat Pasha, in the presence of the Russian, British, and French ambassadors at Istanbul.⁹⁰

The question of *vakıfs* on Bulgarian territory, which was raised in the Turkish–Bulgarian Protocol carried political and economic consequences. For the Porte *vakıfs* formed part of the imperial patrimony that was left to the care of Turkish Muslims. They, as this chapter has suggested, regarded *vakıfs* as an imperial resource for coping with the national present. Perhaps because *vakıfs* were entwined with so many issues, the Turkish–Bulgarian Protocol parsed its approach to them. Two separate commissions were to be created, one administrative dealing with *mütevelli* claims on exceptional, i.e., *müstesna*, *vakıfs* and another dealing with all other types. Of the second commission, which was never created, the chief *müftü* had to be a member by right.

Müstesna vakıfs comprised a host of small endowments as well as those established by dervish orders and Ottoman warriors (*gazi*) upon conquest.⁹¹ The Administrative Commission treated *müstesna vakıfs* exclusively as those that had been founded by the *gazis*, those frontier lords in the Balkans—Muslim and Christian—who had been granted lands and/or taxes from them by the Ottoman sultans in exchange for conquering territory for the sovereign. Such land grants were converted into *vakıf* to preserve them for the warrior and his descendants, to serve the religious and social needs of newly incorporated regions as well as to

⁸⁹ Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 62–73.

⁹⁰ Statelova and Grüncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia*, 217–30.

⁹¹ Ivanova, “Introduction,” 16; Barnes, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations*, 5–49; Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 9n21 and n22.

root Ottoman presence.⁹² The Administrative Commission was founded on 27 July/9 August 1909 and chaired by the advisor to the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs. The other members included the governor of Ruse province, a member of the Supreme Court of Appeals, a parliament member from Pleven, and the chief of the Department of State Properties at the Ministry of Finance.⁹³

All *mütevelli*s who appealed to the commission requested the payment of accrued rent on real estate, portion of the tithe or land tax, or reinstatement as owners in cases in which the Bulgarian government had taken over land.⁹⁴ The commission expected to see original documents that proved that a piece of land was granted to a deserving warrior, the appointment of a *mütevelli*, or verified copies of *vakıfnames* (endowment charters).⁹⁵ Evaluating *mütevelli* claims with such strict criteria enabled the commission to consider the forty-two cases presented to it within less than two months.⁹⁶ All rulings deemed *mütevelli* claims as unfounded due to lack of any or insufficient legal evidence or because the claims concerned *vakıfs* that the commission did not regard as *müstesna*. But even this classification was not strict enough for the commission. It argued that neither the Treaty of Berlin nor the Organic Statue had ever obliged the principality and the province to pay a portion of state taxes to private individuals, including to the trustees of *vakıfs*. A basic principle of international law was that the sovereignty of a new state overrode the sovereignty of the old one in the same territory. The same held true for public finances such as taxes. Thus argued the Administrative Commission in its lengthy preamble to the published decisions, so as to underscore that *mütevelli* claims as well as *vakıfs* more generally lay squarely within the sovereignty of the new Kingdom of Bulgaria.⁹⁷

⁹² On the role of *vakıfs* as tools of empire building in the Balkans, see Vera Mutafchieva, "Za Roliata na Vaküfa v Gradskata Ikonomika na Balkanite pod Turska Vlast (XV–XVII v.)," 378–98, and "Osnovni Problemi v Izuchavaneto na Vaküfa kato Chast ot Sotsialno-ikonomicheskata Struktura na Balkanite pod Osmanska Vlast (XV–XIX v.)," 399–43, both in *Osmanska Sotsialno-ikonomicheska Istoriia*.

⁹³ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 1853, l. 24.

⁹⁴ See TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 118, l. 49, 53–54, 73–74, 79–84, 111, 122, 130.

⁹⁵ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 1853, l. 10.

⁹⁶ The cases can be found in TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 1853, l. 28–208 (odd page numbers contain the text in French, even ones in Bulgarian).

⁹⁷ TsDIA, f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 1853, l. 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22.

The dismissal of the trustees' claims points also to the broader economic significance of the Turkish–Bulgarian Protocol. One of the first acts toward independence was Bulgaria's takeover of a couple of lines that belonged to the Oriental Railway Company (ORC), a company that operated the railways in the Ottoman Empire and whose main capital was Austrian and German.⁹⁸ The Bulgarian government had to buy out (for 2 million gold *levs*) the lines and material facilities. It did not pay compensation to the Porte and the ORC undertook most of the cost for expanding the railroad network.⁹⁹ This further exposed the growing economic power of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans, which was abetted by its annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. The Bulgarian Kingdom, though, managed to negotiate with the Great Powers the end of the Ottoman capitulations regime for Bulgaria which had accorded an ever-expanding bundle of trade privileges to Europe since the sixteenth century. This achievement, as we will see in the following chapters, was diminished by Bulgaria's growing indebtedness, much like its former imperial suzerain, to European financial institutions.

⁹⁸ Statelova and Grŭncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia*, 218–20.

⁹⁹ See Part III of the Turkish–Bulgarian Protocol, *Dŭrzhaven Vestnik* 13.

CHAPTER FIVE

Muslim Land vs. Bulgarian Labor: The Cost of Building a Modern Capitalist Nation

In 1901, looking forward to the twentieth century, Boncho Boev, a noted Bulgarian economist, key figure in the Bulgarian Economic Association (founded in 1897), and future director (1906–8) of the Bulgarian National Bank, concluded:

The truth is that foreign capital can do a lot to increase domestic productivity, but we should not forget that foreign capital does not arrive to us easily nor does it wish to risk investment in nonmonopolistic enterprises. There is no need to add that agriculture should be one of the priorities of future economic policy. As much as we wish to plant and develop large-scale industry in Bulgaria, our national economy will still retain its primarily agricultural character.¹

Boev's forecast appeared almost two decades after the Principality of Bulgaria had taken over Eastern Rumelia. His comments formed part of the ongoing economic debate in post-Ottoman Bulgaria whether the route to modern statehood passed through an economy based on industry or agriculture.² Wishing to place a unified Bulgaria on an equal footing in the "family of nations," statesmen increased demands for agricultural produc-

¹ Quoted in Roumen Avramov, *Stopanskiiat XX vek na Bŭlgariia* (Sofia: Tsentŭr za Liberalni Strategii, 2001), 21.

² See the debate in Dimitŭr Blagoev's essay framed, as it were, through his socialist ideological perspective, *Ikonomichnoto Razvitiie na Bŭlgariia: industriia ili zemledelie?* (Varna: Pechatnitsa "Vzaimnost," 1903).

tivity to generate capital and promote industrialization. This strategy for economic development rested on two measures. The first involved taking loans from European financial institutions, which made Bulgaria increasingly beholden to international creditors and their local proxies who influenced economic policy as well as the political framework. The second measure involved exploiting Muslim lands and trying to mechanize the labor of Bulgarian peasants.

By the outbreak of the First World War these measures had polarized the country along a rural–urban axis, leading to the emergence of a Bulgarian agrarian populist movement. Meanwhile, the budding Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Empire inspired Bulgaria’s Muslims to fight back against their marginalization. Put differently, Bulgarian citizenship was becoming the realm of two national groups whose participation in state building disillusioned Bulgarian peasants with state authorities and Turkish Muslims with the national framework in which they were marked as unwelcome remnants from the imperial past.

Let me first explain how statesmen charted Bulgaria’s economic development since the 1885 unification until the beginning of the Balkan Wars (that flowed into the Great War). I will focus especially on the politics of foreign loans. For a host of reasons to be discussed in the section below loans often fell short of providing the necessary capital for growth. State builders compensated, as we will see in the second chapter section, by increasing both taxes and production demands from agriculture—the largest sector in the economy. In the last section, I show how governments occasionally tried to mute Bulgarian Christian discontent and agrarian populism by playing a volatile game with nationalist irredentism vis-à-vis Ottoman Macedonia and Thrace. Meanwhile, for many Turkish Muslims economic policies and nationalist agitation only underscored the importance of their own national mobilization.

LOANS FOR DEVELOPMENT?

I will begin with an outline of the principality’s precarious economy in order to convey how important to nation-state building were both Turkish Muslim landed properties as well as the mechanized labor of Bulgarian Christian cultivators. Postunification Bulgarian governments wished to expand the railroad network to aid industrialization and modernization. This goal involved them in direct conflict with the European branch of the Oriental Railway Company (*Compagnie générale de chemins de fer de*

l'Europe orientale, ORC). It had constructed railways in Eastern Rumelia with concession from the Porte as part of a larger network of railroads in the empire, which had begun after the Crimean War (1853–56). The longest line in the European territories of the empire was the Oriental Railway that connected Istanbul to Edirne and Sofia with a branch that linked Selanik to Edirne.³ Railroad construction in the Ottoman Empire as well as in post-Ottoman Bulgaria was funded with loans and capital primarily from French, Austrian, and German investors.⁴ After the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 when the Ottoman Empire lost de facto or de jure most of its European territories, the railways that were owned and operated by the ORC became a matter of European financial interests and domestic Balkan economic development. Tense diplomatic exchanges as well as negotiations with company representatives followed over the next decade. These negotiations become more complicated after the annexation of Eastern Rumelia when more lines had to be bought out and Russia hindered loan talks so as to bring the rebellious unified polity in Russian orbit. At the core of these discussions ultimately stood the question of how much, from whom, and under what conditions the principality should take its first international loan both to meet the compensation demands of the ORC as well as to continue with railroad construction.⁵

At the end of 1888 the principality concluded a loan with an English bank. According to the terms of the loan agreement a portion of the funds had to be used for army supplies and payments toward the Ottoman debt (which was partly underwritten by English financiers), a portion would be invested in the building of a railway (between Tsaribrod and Vakarel), and a portion would pay for the Ruse-Varna line that was taken over by the principality.⁶ Additionally, between 1889 and 1902 Bulgarian governments signed contracts with Austrian and primarily French financial institutions for seven loans and six advanced payments. Officially the funds were to be applied toward railroad and sea ports construction. The loan concluded in 1896 also specifically provided funds to the district agricultural credit-cooperatives so that they could repay their debts to the Bulgarian National

³ Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914," 807.

⁴ Tsvetana Todorova, *Diplomaticheska Istorii na Vŭnshnite Zaemi, 1888–1912* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1971), introduction.

⁵ Ibid., 60–75.

⁶ Ibid., 83–94.

Bank.⁷ By the beginning of the Balkan Wars (1912–13) loans had facilitated economic growth and industrialization but had also made Bulgaria's economy effectively dependent on French financial institutions for loans.⁸

This economic, and ultimately political, dependence became most pronounced in 1902 when, to ensure payment, creditors demanded a guaranteed percentage of the revenue from the tobacco industry, one of the most profitable economic sectors. When the loan conditions became known to the Bulgarian National Assembly, heated conflicts ensued between the coalition government of P. Karavelov and St. Danev and the opposition. They were accompanied by protests in the southeastern tobacco-growing areas of the country and a small rally in Sofia organized by the Bulgarian Workers' Social Democratic Party.⁹ The National Assembly voted against the loan which prompted Prime Minister Karavelov to resign. Charged by Prince Ferdinand to form a new government, Danev resumed negotiations with the French bank Banque de Paris et des Pay-Bas. Soon a loan contract was drafted that stipulated that the loan would be guaranteed with tax revenue from the tobacco banderoles and stamps as well as by the Russian government. Signed in Paris by Prime Minister Danev, and in the presence of a Russian State Bank delegate, the contract was now approved in the National Assembly.¹⁰ In addition,

⁷ Ibid., *Zaemi*, 170–71, 319. Austria-Hungary had commercial interests in the construction of railway links in Serbia especially, but also in Bulgaria, though primarily to aid the sale of Austrian-manufactured goods rather than to facilitate these countries' export activities. To invest capital in their economies, Balkan countries in the early twentieth century generally resorted to loans primarily from French bankers. On this point, see also Palairat, *The Balkan Economies*, 328; John R. Lampe, "Imperial Borderlands or Capitalist Periphery? Redefining Balkan Backwardness, 1520–1914," in *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages until the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Daniel Chirot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 198–99.

⁸ Tsvetana Todorova, "Kapitalisticheskata Industrializatsiia na Bŭlgariia do Balkanskite Voini (1912–1913)," *Izvestiia na Instituta po Istoriia* 27 (1984); Simeon Damianov, *Frenskoto Ikonomichesko Pronikvane v Bŭlgariia: ot Osvobozhdenieto do Pŭrvata Svetovna Voina, 1878–1914* (Sofia: BAN, 1971).

⁹ Todorova, *Zaemi*, 285–98; for a list of the guarantees for all loans until 1912, see Kirill G. Popoff, *La Bulgarie Économique 1879–1911 (études statistique)*, trad. V. Robeff (Sofia: Imprimerie de la Cœur, Société par Actions, 1920), 492–93. Salabashev wrote in his memoirs that Karavelov signed on the terms of the loan without having read them and when he did, he was grieved, ashamed, eventually succumbing to depression, sickness, and death, Salabashev, *Spomeni*, 143–47.

¹⁰ Todorova, *Zaemi*, 302–10.

the creditors stationed their representatives in Sofia to monitor the implementation of the loan conditions.¹¹

Revenue from the tobacco banderoles and stamps remained as guarantees for the loans concluded in 1904 and 1907. In addition, the terms of the 1904, 1907, and 1909 loans stipulated that the lending banks would open credit accounts for Bulgaria. Specified allotments from them had to be used toward the purchase of imported goods, for example, supplies for the Bulgarian army from the French military industry. By 1912, the sum owed to creditors was larger than the combined value of agricultural and industrial production.¹² The highly unpopular loan concluded on the eve of the Great War also mortgaged the coal mines of Pernik. Finally, using revenue from a particular economic sector as loan guarantee increased the role of creditors in the development of Bulgaria's fiscal policy.¹³

According to some contemporaries as well as Bulgarian scholars before the socialist period, the loans taken in 1889, 1892, and 1896 were for the most part used wisely.¹⁴ But judging by how concerned the authorities were with the emigration of Turkish Muslims indebted to the agricultural credit-cooperatives, as we saw in the previous chapter, the 1896 loan must not have helped the agricultural sector significantly. And the last four years of the nineteenth century were marked by poor harvests due to inclement weather as well as by the sharp global decline in wheat prices which only exacerbated peasant indebtedness.¹⁵ In fact the lenders (Banque Internationale de Paris and Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas) stipulated that all revenues and properties of the agricultural credit-cooperatives were to be placed as guarantees for the loan and appointed a permanent official to oversee its application.

¹¹ For a list of Bulgaria's loans through the interwar period and their terms, see Kiril G. Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia prez 1911: Statisticheski Izsledvaniia* (Sofia: Dŭrzhavna Pechatnitsa, 1916), 439, and Avramov, *Komunalniiat Kapitalizŭm*, vol. 1, 541.

¹² Todorova, *Zaemi*, 464, 467.

¹³ Avramov, *Komunalniiat Kapitalizŭm*, vol. 1, 539–48.

¹⁴ Todorova, *Zaemi*, 320; Salabashev, *Spomeni*, 74–85.

¹⁵ Vladislav Topalov, "Stopanskata kriza v Bŭlgariia prez 1879–1900," *Izvestiia na Instituta za Istoriia* 12 (1963): 47–75; Stoian Bochev, "Obshti Stopanski Usloviia sled Osvobozhdenieto (do Balkanskata Voina)," in Stoian Bochev, *Kapitalizmŭt v Bŭlgariia*, ed. Roumen Avramov (Sofia: Fondatsiia Bŭlgarska Nauka i Kultura, 1998), 308; Palairret, *The Balkan Economies*, 180; Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 164.

Economic historian Michael Palairet contends that the Serbian and Bulgarian governments viewed state ownership of railways as a matter of sovereignty, thus generally building railroads for strategic purposes not commercial viability.¹⁶ In 1907 the Bulgarian economist Kiril G. Popov wrote that railways and ports in post-Ottoman Bulgaria were built not as the result of well-conceived state policy. In fact, their construction was imposed on Bulgarian governments by European creditors as a condition for concluding loans.¹⁷

Palairet's and Popov's claims are not the subject of my study, but they do point to the dissatisfaction of Bulgarian contemporaries as well as scholars during and after the socialist period with the ways in which loans were used. Many maintain that the 1902, 1904, 1907, 1909, and 1912 loans were not invested in infrastructure that would aid industrialization, let alone agriculture, but in financing Bulgaria's expanding army, in payments toward the loans as well as the Ottoman debt, in refinancing previous loans, in covering the ever-growing budget deficits, and in maintaining the swelling administration.¹⁸ Ivan Salabashev, who served as a minister of finance a few times between 1889 and the beginning of the First World War, provides chilling examples in his memoirs of wastefulness and corruption among government officials who used their position and state funds for gambling, to develop patronage relationships as well as for personal enrichment through shady real estate deals.¹⁹

Bulgaria closed the nineteenth century with an economic crisis in which the government of Konstantin Stoilov collapsed (January 1899). Until the proclamation of independence in 1908, eight governments held power; yet a ninth one led the country into the Balkan Wars and a tenth took the country into the Great War.²⁰ The frequency with which governments changed reflected several important features of Bulgarian political life. After former regent and Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov was assassinated, the anti-Russian faction of Bulgarian politicians lost its grip on

¹⁶ Palairet, *The Balkan Economies*, 327–30.

¹⁷ See his words quoted in Roumen Avramov, *Komunalniiat Kapitalizim*, vol. 1, 537–38.

¹⁸ Todorova, *Zaemi*, 319–20, 463; Avramov, *Komunalniiat Kapitalizim*, vol. 1, 242–46. On the problems of the growing state bureaucracy, see Ivan Ev. Geshov, "Chinovnicheskiiat Proletariat," in *Dumi i Dela. Finansovi i Ekonomicheski Studii* (Sofia: Iv. G. Govedarov i C-ie, 1899), 48–65.

¹⁹ Salabashev, *Spomeni*, passim.

²⁰ See Statelova and Gruncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia*.

power. Meanwhile, in Stambolov's shadow Prince Ferdinand had slowly been consolidating his authority and power by courting ministers and parliament members.²¹ Since his international recognition in 1896 and until the outbreak of the First World War Ferdinand successfully exploited rivalries among parties as well as politicians to orchestrate elections for the National Assembly and appoint governments at will. Economic policies and especially the conclusion of loan agreements often depended on Ferdinand's capability to control the political process so as to enhance the role of the palace in government. Ferdinand's capability to manipulate the volatile political life during the first decade of the twentieth century was strengthened by his tacit alliance with nationalist organizations and sections of the army which supported the Bulgarian insurgency in Ottoman Macedonia and looked for an opportune moment to seize the region for Bulgaria.²² Between 1903 and 1907 the Bulgarian National Assembly approved expenditures that roughly equaled the state budget; at least 30 percent of the funds were spent on the army whose peacetime size grew, in 1906 alone, from 40,000 to 55,000.²³

The period roughly from 1903 until the beginning of the Balkan Wars, however, was also described by contemporaries as the "seven fat years"²⁴ marked by increased agricultural production, especially in grain, and a couple very good harvests in 1904 and 1907.²⁵ In 1905 Bulgaria produced the most wheat per person in Europe, which was the country's main export item. This fact underscores the country's economic dependence on grain exports.²⁶ The centrality of agriculture to the society is highlighted also by the fact that until 1911, 74.7 percent of the country's population was rural while 18.4 percent of the urban population still made a living from agriculture in 1905.²⁷ Yet foreign investment in agriculture was lacking and official efforts to modernize and commercialize it were

²¹ See Salabashev's *Spomeni* on this.

²² Statelova and Grŭncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia*, vol. 3, 145–205; Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 227–399.

²³ Zheko Popov, "Problemi na Vŭtreshnata Politika na Vtoroto Narodnoliberalno Pravitelstvo (1903–1908)," in *Vŭtreshnata politika na Bŭlgariia prez kapitalizma 1878–1944*, ed. Iono Mitev (Sofia: BAN, Institut za Istoriia, 1980), 86–87.

²⁴ Avramov, *Stopanskiiat XX vek*, 14.

²⁵ See Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 146–48, 156–62, 168–76; Todorova, *Zaemi*, 461.

²⁶ Tsvetana Todorova, "Industrializatsiia i Strukturni Promeni v Bŭlgariia predi Pŭrvata Svetovna Voina," *Istoricheski Pregled* 5 (1991), 31–33.

²⁷ See Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 85, 135–36, which was a 4.3 percent decline from 1892.

predicated on increasing land taxes as well as other indirect ones (on spirits and tobacco, for instance). When foreign private investment did make its way to Bulgaria in the first decade of the twentieth century, it was for the establishment of factories, trade companies, and banks.²⁸ Ultimately, the gaps in the economy left by the expensive foreign capital had to be filled with profits from agriculture. They were to be invested in the growth of domestic industries, which enjoyed state protection from international competition.²⁹ Official legislative initiatives to ameliorate rural conditions, to promote education, to mechanize labor, as we will see below, engendered conflicts between state authorities and Bulgarian Christian peasants over Muslim lands as well as over the purpose of landownership.

BULGARIAN LABOR

After the Russo-Ottoman War, legal regulations, administrative practices, and public discourse favored the Bulgarian Christian over the Turkish Muslim landowner. By the late 1880s, Bulgarian governments became increasingly preoccupied with developing a modern capitalist economy. Therefore, they became more interested in increasing agricultural productivity and profit than in multiplying Bulgarian Christian smallholders. The administration of Prime Minister Konstantin Stoliiov fashioned itself as the true vehicle for carrying Bulgarians into modernity, focusing on making the labor of Bulgarian Christians engaged in agricultural production more profitable and in line with practices in the “civilized” world. Stoilov’s priority on profit from labor rather than on guarding the Bulgarian Christian landholder ultimately undermined state efforts to make peasants “modern.”

In the first years after the Russo-Ottoman War, some politicians in the principality believed that the state had to buy large Muslim estates and sell them among the landless Christians.³⁰ The Law for Ameliorating the Condition of the Agricultural Population on the Gospodarski and Chiflishki Lands (estates worked mostly with hired labor) of 1880 and its amendment in 1885 ensured that rural Bulgarians who had worked the land of a Muslim large landholder for at least ten years would own the piece under

²⁸ Bochev, “Obshti Stopanski Usloviia sled Osvobozhdenieto,” 310.

²⁹ Avramov, *Komunalniiat Kapitalizim*, vol. 1, 166–73.

³⁰ See the letter to Alexander Liudskanov: Bŭlgarski Istoricheski Arkhiv (BIA)-NBKM f. 12, a. e. 4, l. 139–42.

their cultivation.³¹ Between 1892 and 1905 the number of individual landowners who made a living from agriculture had increased almost by 5.5 percent.³² Bulgarian Christians continued buying lands from Turkish (and Tatar) Muslims who immigrated to the Ottoman Empire. These land purchases were often funded by loans with exorbitantly high interest rates, despite a special law that fixed rates at 12 percent. By the turn of the twentieth century this had led to chronic indebtedness in the countryside which was further exacerbated by the increased price of land, almost three times between 1880 and 1900.³³

Reports from the provincial governors in Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria are rife with examples of the illegal plowing of pastures and wood groves. Little was being done to stop these occurrences both for lack of administrative capabilities as well as because Bulgarian politicians tied the legitimacy of the new polities to the proliferation of Bulgarian Christian landowners, especially smallholders.³⁴ In the post-1885 years, however, this priority was gradually modified. The result, as I will show below, was that central and local authorities clashed with rural Bulgarian Christians over access to common lands and the “property of nonrepatriated Turks.”³⁵

Let me first illustrate this shift by briefly narrating a dispute over a pasture between a Bulgarian village on one hand and local, district, and provincial authorities, on the other. In April 1886, Mr. Krüstev, the mayor of the village of Kuru-Cheshme (district and province of Haskovo, formerly in Eastern Rumelia) and the elders Velcho Dimov, Ivan Hristev, and Hadzhi Nikola Georgiev requested permission directly from the prince to use the pasture of the neighboring Turkish Muslim village of Kara Paz-

³¹ Tseno Petrov, *Agrarite Reformi v Bŭlgariia, 1880–1944* (Sofia: BAN, 1975) 29; Evgeni Iochev, *Zakonodatelstvoto v tsarstvo Bŭlgariia (1879–1944 g.): konstitutsiia, zakoni, motivi, dokladi, ukazi, naredbi, naredbi-zakoni* (Sofia: Fondatsiia “Otvoreno Obshtestvo,” [1999]), 65–66.

³² Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 84.

³³ Veska Nikolova, *Narodnata Partiia i Burzhoaznata demokratiia: Kabinetŭt na Konstantin Stoilov, 1894–1899* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1986), 108, 113.

³⁴ For concerns over deforestation, see *Doklad na Starozagorskii prefekt za sŭstoianieto na okruŭga* (Stara Zagora: Znanie, 1884); Zhak Natan et al., *Ikonomika na Bŭlgariia*, vol. 1, *Ikonomikata na Bŭlgariia do sotsialisticheskata revoliutsiia* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1969), 338; Palaiet, *The Balkan Economies*, 181–82.

³⁵ TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 146, l. 17; TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 114, l. 13, 15.

arlii.³⁶ The residents of Kara Pazarlii had sold all their land and houses to the Kuru-Cheshme villagers and immigrated to the Ottoman Empire in 1884. The Kuru-Cheshme villagers bought the property of the Kara Pazarlii Turkish Muslims with the intention of using the pasture of that village as well. The Haskovo provincial authorities had forbidden the Kuru-Cheshme villagers to use the pasture; instead, the province had taken over the pasture because the Ottoman Land Code (which was in force in Eastern Rumelia) enabled the state to manage common lands, such as pastures. The Ministry of Finance of unified Bulgaria upheld that decision in the summer of 1886. Apparently the Haskovo governor received similar requests regarding the pasture and wood groves of four other Muslim villages whose inhabitants had emigrated. He asked the Department of State Property and Forests at the Ministry of Finance what should be done in cases in which the residents of neighboring villages bought the land and houses of departing Muslims and appropriated the village pasture and wood groves. Official response was clear: the buyers did not reside in the village even though they had bought houses and arable fields and therefore had no rights over pasture and wood groves. These lands were characterized as laying “outside private property.” Moreover, municipalities were also not supposed to dispose of pastures at will. In 1892 the Ministry of Justice sent a circular to district courts reminding municipalities that they could not sell pastures in order to pay municipal debts.³⁷

The position of the Ministry of Finance expressed a conceptual and policy shift that was already underway before the 1885 union: the increase of Bulgarian Christian smallholders, while politically expedient, appeared to be economically burdensome. In 1884 the prefect of Zāgra-i Atīk/Stara Zagora, Atanas T. Iliev, had explicitly linked the proliferation of smallholders to the prevalence of poor and backward subsistence-oriented agriculture in Eastern Rumelia.³⁸ He defined the main problem as the lack of capital in agriculture; the emigrating Turkish Muslims who sold their lands to Bulgarian Christians took away with them the money and work animals while the buyers were left behind usually with debts and uncultivated pieces of land. In 1890 the Stara Zagora prefect Shtǔrbakov concluded that the primitive methods employed by agricultural producers

³⁶ The petition was sent to the Ministry of Finance and then redirected to the governor of Haskovo. The case can be traced in TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 114, l. 13–26.

³⁷ TsDIA, f. 242k, op. 1, a. e. 29, l. 181.

³⁸ *Doklad na Starozagorskii prefekt* (1884), 49. Palairret, *The Balkan Economies*, 181.

made their wheat too expensive whereas they could sell it only at low prices.³⁹ The governor of Plovdiv made even more detailed monetary calculations to illustrate how unprofitable agricultural labor was as practiced at the time.⁴⁰ Shtürbakov argued that in “other educated countries the labor of agricultural producers ... is richly awarded” because it was mechanized. He suggested that the provincial council purchase from the budgets of richer districts “European ploughs” and “machines” because “our agricultural population must get used to working the land” with them despite its reluctance.⁴¹

Many governors were skeptical that rural habits could be changed in the foreseeable future, but nonetheless insisted that newly minted teachers from the state agricultural schools as well as exhibitions would convert cultivators to high productivity. These official hopes stemmed from the popularity of the International Fair in Plovdiv (1892), which had excited some landholders about agricultural machines.⁴² By the time Stoilov’s government was in place, Minister of Finance Ivan Ev. Geshov suggested that agricultural producers should form associations to help each other with purchasing equipment.⁴³ Making agricultural labor more profitable had clearly become a priority for state officials, so much so that in his report for 1897/98 the governor of Haskovo wrote that the agricultural credit unions in the province had refused loans to “those villagers who simply led by their typical character [*kharakterna cherta*], wanted money in order to acquire arable land [*rabotna zemia*] without taking into consideration the unfavorable conditions in which they are positioned as well as their incapability to bear a loan in view of the poor means employed in agricultural production which also yield poor income.”⁴⁴

³⁹ *Doklad na Staro-Zagorskii okrúzhnen upravitel za sústoianieto na Staro-Zagorskoto okrúzhie (1889–1890)* (Plovdiv: “Edinstvo,” 1890), 9.

⁴⁰ *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Plovdivskoto okrúzhie* (Plovdiv: “Súglasie,” 1891), 22.

⁴¹ *Doklad na Staro-Zagorskii okrúzhnen upravitel (1889–1890)*, 9–10.

⁴² *Doklad za sústoianieto na Slivenskii okrúg prez tekushtata 1894–95 godina* (Sliven: “Búlgarsko Zname,” 1895), 9; *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Plovdivskii okrúg prez 1892–93 godini* (Plovdiv: “Edinstvo,” 1893), 20; *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Haskovskii okrúg za prez 1889–1890 godina* (Sliven: “Búlgarsko Zname,” 1890), 9; *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Haskovskii okrúg za prez 1892–1893* (Haskovo: A. Mazenov, 1893), 4.

⁴³ Ivan Ev. Geshov, “Rech pri Otvarianie Zasedaniata na Kommisiata za podobrenie polozhenieto na Selskoto naselenie,” in *Dumi i Dela. Finansovi i Ekonomicheski Studii* (Sofia: Iv. G. Govedarov i C-ie, 1899), 204.

⁴⁴ *Izlozhenie za sústoianieto na Haskovskoto okrúzhie prez 1897/98* (Haskovo: A. Mazenov, 1898), 45.

This statement captures the emerging conflict of priorities between Bulgarian Christian agricultural producers and the modernizing state: the former interpreted state efforts to mechanize agriculture as an assault on the status of landholders, whereas officials saw doubts as evidence of inherent conservatism. Provincial officials regularly blamed Bulgarian Christian villagers for perpetuating backwardness by ignoring “advice about the necessity of introducing new things in agriculture.”⁴⁵ In 1888 the governor of Plovdiv noted with concern that every year 1,000 to 2,000 *uvrats* of county or state pasture and wood groves got plowed and appropriated. In addition to “ignorant” peasants he blamed village mayors for condoning such behavior (presumably for personal benefit) and thereby stalling development.⁴⁶ It is, however, equally likely that municipal pasture was basically sold to pay off the various debts of counties.⁴⁷ This unregulated exploitation of common lands occurred, according to the governor, because Bulgarian agriculture lacked basic machines and capital.⁴⁸ By focusing on acquiring more land and relying on what they knew from “grandpa and grandma,”⁴⁹ Bulgarian Christian peasants not only harmed themselves, especially when borrowing money to buy land,⁵⁰ but infringed upon “state interests”⁵¹ as well. Specifically, central and provincial authorities wished to develop the livestock sector for export and hence needed pastures on which to feed the animals.⁵² Cultivators, meanwhile, wished to appropriate pastures either for arable purposes or to feed their own work animals or both.⁵³ During the first decade of the twentieth century, however, in an effort to increase agricultural output, the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture started giving pastures to landless peasants as well as selling pastures at auctions. This was accompanied by the distribution of high-quality seed and implements to combat crop diseases. Peasants who turned pastures into fields and vineyards were released from taxes for four and eight years respectively. So state economic

⁴⁵ *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Haskovskii okrŭg ... 1889–1890*, 8.

⁴⁶ *Doklad na Plovdivskii okrŭzhen upravitel ... 1887–88*, 6.

⁴⁷ TsDIA, f. 242k, op. 1, a. e. 29, l. 181.

⁴⁸ *Doklad na Plovdivskii okrŭzhen upravitel ... 1887–88*, 8–9.

⁴⁹ *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Haskovskii okrŭg za prez 1889–1890 godina* (Sliven: “Bŭlgarsko Zname,” 1890), 5.

⁵⁰ *Izlozhenie St.-Zagorskii okr. upravitel ... 1894–95*, 26–27; *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Haskovskoto ... 1897/98*, 45.

⁵¹ *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Haskovskii okrŭg za prez 1889–1890 godina* (Sliven: “Bŭlgarsko Zname,” 1890), 5.

⁵² *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na St.-Zagorskoto ... 1897–1898*, 18–20.

⁵³ *Doklad za sŭstoianieto na Slivenskii ... 1894–95*, 15.

priorities were quickly reshuffled and increased production as well as peasant impropration came at the expense of livestock development.⁵⁴

Yet Bulgarian Christian landholders and Bulgarian governments clashed over competing understandings of what the term “agriculturally productive landholder” meant. Governments valued proprietors who were ready to make their harvest of better quality and more abundant by using machines and better sorts of seeds and fertilizers.⁵⁵ Stoilov’s government worked both to encourage industrialization as well as to commercialize agriculture. The Law for Encouraging Enterprises offered similar financial aid to agricultural and nonagricultural endeavors so long as the former were focused on establishing model gardens, dairies, wineries, cattle breeding, etc.⁵⁶ That is, the financial support promised by the law promoted ways of going beyond small-scale subsistence/surplus agriculture in which the smallholder was so important. Annual financial aid was provided to newspapers and journals that spread “agro-technical knowledge” as well as to agricultural cooperatives that organized practical courses. Finance Minister Geshov explained that, “Our peasants are masters of the land. But they are slaves to routine, ignorance, and selfishness.”⁵⁷ Teachers needed to “enlighten and discipline [the peasants’] mind, will, and heart” and show them “how to live like human beings, how to treat their neighbors.”⁵⁸ This project of “civilizing” the countryside, which informed Stoilov’s administration as well as his successors in the first decade of the twentieth century, entailed two related efforts: 1) stressing formal and informal education; 2) building up agricultural associations.

In 1897 the minister of trade and agriculture appealed to school inspectors to employ village teachers in gathering statistics about agricultural production, not only because many village mayors were barely literate, but also because in “developed agricultural countries (like France) the most accurate

⁵⁴ Statelova and Grūncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Būlgariia*, 181; for tables showing the increase in private landownership, see Popov, *Stopanska Būlgariia*, 83.

⁵⁵ All provincial reports cited thus far bemoan the lack of technology in agricultural production.

⁵⁶ Nikolova, *Narodnata Partiia*, 109–10.

⁵⁷ Ivan Ev. Geshov, “Zemledelcheskite imoti i proizvoditelnost na Būlgariia,” in *Spomeni i Studii* (Sofia: P. Glushkov, 1928), 309–11. For the socialists’ argument that villagers were losing their lands, see the article “Polozhenieto na selските rabotnitsi,” in *Rabotnicheski Vestnik*, no. 3, 19 September 1897, *Nov Vek*, no. 78, 6/18 September 1899.

⁵⁸ *Rabotnicheski Vestnik*, no. 3, 19 September 1897; Geshov, “Zemledelcheskite imoti,” 317.

agricultural statistics were due to the active role the public [*narodni*] teacher played⁵⁹ in this effort. The ministry was deeply concerned that agricultural output was low. This was partly due to the excessive rain in the spring and summer of 1897. Partly the problem stemmed from the poor quality of grain seed. In response, the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture asked the Ministry of Education to charge village teachers with encouraging agricultural producers to acquire better seed. Poorer villagers were expected to share the cost of good quality seed as much as possible but also to rely on municipal help. In short, village teachers were supposed to serve as state vehicles for persuading agricultural producers, municipal authorities, and the agricultural credit-cooperatives of the need to purchase at least reaping machines and higher quality seed.⁶⁰ Plovdiv provincial authorities organized lectures for peasants instructing them in advanced methods of cultivation.⁶¹ Also, since Plovdiv province was the main rice producer in the country,⁶² the authorities set up a special rice savings account which collected revenue from the fees paid for water usage and then applied that revenue to mend old or build new river canals for rice irrigation as well as to dry swamps.⁶³

Provincial officials hoped that large landholders would be the state's partner in modernizing agriculture. Officials mistakenly believed that large landowners would lead the way in adopting machines that increased productivity.⁶⁴ In reality large landholders who were a minority among landholders⁶⁵ used hired labor and had little incentive to buy machinery since the hired laborers themselves did not want to abandon the wooden plough for fear of losing work and receiving lower wages.⁶⁶ In addition, agricultural machines were expensive because they were chiefly imported.⁶⁷ To

⁵⁹ *Uchilishten Pregled*, vol. 2 (May 1897): 544–45.

⁶⁰ *Uchilishten Pregled*, vol. 2 (September 1897), 1015–18.

⁶¹ *Izlozheniie za Plovdivskoto okružhie prez 1904–1905 g.* (Plovdiv: “Makedoniia,” 1905), 14.

⁶² In 1911 there were six districts that produced rice; see Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 153.

⁶³ *Izlozhenie za Ūstoianieto na Plovdivskoto okružhie prez 1902–1903 g.* (Plovdiv: D. V. Manchov, 1903), 13. *Izlozheniie za Plovdivskoto okružhie prez 1904–1905 g.*, 14–16; *Izlozheniie za Plovdivskoto okružhie prez 1906–1907 g.* (Plovdiv: Tŭrgovska Pechatnitsa, 1907), 16–17.

⁶⁴ *Ikonomikata na Bŭlgariia*, 334–35.

⁶⁵ Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 90.

⁶⁶ *Izlozhenie za ūstoianieto na Haskovskii okrŭg ... 1889–1890 godina*, 9; *Izlozhenie na Haskovskii okrŭzhen upravitel prez 1889*, 16. Palairet, *The Balkan Economies*, 181.

⁶⁷ Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 139–40.

remedy this situation, at the beginning of the twentieth century some provinces started buying and distributing machines and seed.⁶⁸ No doubt this practice expanded after the National Assembly passed a bill in January 1904 which merged all provincial agricultural credit-cooperatives into a national agrarian bank, which became the main creditor of agriculture in the country boasting starting capital of 35 million Bulgarian *levs* and eighty-five branches throughout the country.⁶⁹ By 1910 the usage of the metal plough had increased.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, at the beginning of the twentieth century provincial governors still reported on the slow mechanization of agricultural labor, citing as a reason, besides traditionalism, the fact that the plots of individual peasants were dispersed thus making the use of expensive machines cumbersome and unprofitable.⁷¹ Land fragmentation was a central feature of smallholding agriculture until the beginning of the Balkan Wars.⁷² This, according to contemporary politicians, was due to the customary laws of inheritance whereby a woman's property remained outside the family's thus preventing the consolidation of larger farms. Accordingly, between 1904 and 1907 laws limited women's inheritance rights after marriage while also granting inheritance privileges to children who stayed in the household even after marriage.⁷³ This gender discriminatory measure had dubious economic benefits; systematic efforts to consolidate strips started being made only in the 1920s. Some statesmen explained the difficulty of diminishing fragmentation with peasants' recalcitrant conservatism⁷⁴

⁶⁸ *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Plovdivskoto okrŭzhie prez 1901–1902 g.* (Plovdiv: D. V. Manchov, 1902), 19; *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na St.-Zagorskoto okrŭzhie prez 1901–1902 g.* (Stara Zagora: "Svetlina," 1902), 9; *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na St.-Zagorskoto okrŭzhie prez 1905–1906 g.* (Stara Zagora: "Svetlina," 1906), 21.

⁶⁹ Statelova and Grüncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia*, 181.

⁷⁰ Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 141–42.

⁷¹ *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Plovdivskoto okrŭzhie prez 1901–1902 g.*, 19; *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Burgaskoto okrŭzhie prez 1901/1902 godina* (Burgas: Khr. V. Velchev & C-ie, 1902), 28.

⁷² Popov, *Stopanska Bŭlgariia*, 91.

⁷³ Zh. Popov, "Problemi na Vŭtreshnata Politika," 99.

⁷⁴ See the lengthy study on agriculture by minister in several governments G. D. Nachovich, *Nekolko Stranitsi po Zemedeliето v Bŭlgariia i Stranstvo* (Sofia: Pechatnitsa na Iv. P. Daskalov I C-ie, 1902). He argued that the modernization of agriculture along the lines of other European countries (frequently giving as examples Belgium, France, and Denmark) would civilize the Bulgarian rural population. His disapproval of the strip system is succinctly formulated on pp. 4–5.

though smallholders often sold strips in order to repay debts while larger landowners found it more profitable to split their holdings and lease them rather than farm a large unit.⁷⁵

This preference for land—fragmented as it may be—over new method discloses peasants' reluctance to change their relation as persons to agricultural land. After the Russo-Ottoman War, legal as well as illicit acquisition of "Muslim" land had turned landless or near-landless Bulgarian Christian villagers, albeit indebted for land purchases, into landowners.⁷⁶ The post-1885 order threatened to reverse that momentous change. In order to guard their social status of landowners, for example, Bulgarian Christian villagers tended to hide the existence of *mahlul* land from state officials and whenever possible gradually appropriated it through cultivation.⁷⁷ Rural Turkish Muslims, on the other hand, reported *mahlul* land linked to other Muslims and demanded monetary reward (in accordance with Ottoman practice), thereby perhaps inadvertently subverting the self-entitlement of Bulgarian Christians but also affirming state authority to mediate access to *mahlul* land.⁷⁸ Hence, Bulgarian Christians wished to work their own—legally or illegally obtained or fragmented—land⁷⁹ in order to preserve the advantages they had gained with the historical shift from direct to nominal Ottoman rule.⁸⁰ Bulgarian Christian smallholders clung to old and less profitable, but known methods of cultivation and landownership, in order to meet the challenges of the new post-Ottoman economic conditions.⁸¹

To mitigate the burden of economic development on peasants, provincial governors began promoting associations in the countryside. Asso-

⁷⁵ Nikolova, *Narodnata Partiia*, 113–14; Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 361.

⁷⁶ G. Todorov, *Vremennoto Rusko*; Liuben Berov "Ikonomicheskite posleditsi ot Rusko-turksta voina prez 1877–1878 g.," in *Osvobozhdenie na Bŭlgariia ot tursko igo: sbornik statii* (Sofia: BKP, 1958), 415–47.

⁷⁷ See the report of the district head (*okrŭzhen upravitel*) of Sliven to the minister of finance: TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 127, l. 76.

⁷⁸ See TsDIA, f. 159k, op. 1, a. e. 111, l. 122–24; a. e. 121, l. 156.

⁷⁹ On the value of having monopoly over one's labor, see Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 35–109.

⁸⁰ The concept of inalienability I am using here is borrowed from Annette Wenier, "Inalienable Wealth," *American Ethnologist*, 12, no. 2. (May 1985): 210–27.

⁸¹ I saw this strategy of relying on and deploying the "old" to meet the challenges of changing social and economic conditions thanks to Gerald Creed, "The Politics of Agriculture: Identity and Socialist Sentiment in Bulgaria," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 843–68.

ciations were expected to ease access to credit, encourage the acquisition of better tools and seed, and promote modern cultivation techniques. Coupled with specialized agricultural education and state insurance against a host of natural disasters, these associations were intended precisely to soften the negative effects of building a Bulgarian capitalist economy.⁸² All state-sponsored specialized agricultural education was offered in Bulgarian as were the various publications addressing questions of cultivation, orchard growing, viniculture, cattle breeding, etc. Turkish Muslims, who did not attend the national public schools, were at a disadvantage in “acquiring” modernity. Attending only community schools they received poor level of Bulgarian-language instruction.⁸³ The Bulgarian state did provide financial support to Turkish schools, which were classified as private, though the support was irregular and considerably less in comparison to the public ones. This sporadic and unequal funding reflected the view that support for Turkish schools was not essential especially in view of the foreign debt and particularly during the economic crisis at the end of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, Bulgarian governments paraded when they provided money, however little, to all Muslim schools and Turkish ones in particular, hoping that the Porte would reciprocate with easing the establishment and functioning of Bulgarian schools in Ottoman Macedonia.⁸⁴ Turkish schools were financially vulnerable also due to the decrease and impoverishment of Muslim endowments, *vakıfs* (as we saw in the previous chapter), whose revenues supported mosques as well as schools. In this situation, Bulgarian-language instruction with its attendant modernization agenda proved much less important to Turkish Muslims than maintaining modern education at all. I will expand on this point shortly.

Bulgarian Christian peasants, meanwhile, were much less appreciative of state modernization efforts than expected. During the end-of-century economic crisis that swept Konstantin Stoilov's government, his successor increased the taxes on the rural population, a course of action that continued until the beginning of the Balkan Wars. The government of T. Ivanchov set out in the fall of 1899 to replace the land tax with a cash

⁸² See provincial reports from the end of the nineteenth century cited earlier as well as Statelova and Grüncharov, *Istoriia na Nova Bŭlgariia*, 179–82, 186–94.

⁸³ D. Tsonkov noted that instruction in Bulgarian in most Turkish schools was insufficient; see *Razvitie na osnovното obrazovanie v Bŭlgariia ot 1878 do 1928 godina* (Sofia: Dŭzhvna Pechatnitsa, 1928).

⁸⁴ Milena B. Methodieva, “Reform, Politics and Culture,” 230–32, 238.

tithe, even though the reverse process had taken place only four years earlier under veteran Eastern Rumelian politicians. Ivanchov's decision fueled massive year-long protests in the countryside; tithing in times of crisis, as far as peasants were concerned, amounted to exploitation.⁸⁵ The police suppressed the protests rather brutally, leaving peasants feeling bitter and hostile to government and to urban life, generally.⁸⁶ The land tax was reintroduced in 1901 though neither peasants nor governments were content with the existing taxation system, which, however, in many respects hit low-income urban residents hardest.⁸⁷ Finance Minister L. Paiakov concluded at the end of 1903 that taxes were neither fully collected nor well utilized. In addition, lack of accurate methods and competent personnel led to the creation of unfair direct taxes, i.e., those collected from farmers. Thus, he advised that indirect taxes (revenue from customs dues, tobacco banderoles, spirits) were the surest way for the treasury to ensure revenue so that budget expenditures didn't increase faster than the population of the country.⁸⁸

Amid the turmoil caused by the brief implementation of the cash tithe arose the Bulgarian Agricultural National Union (BANU), founded in 1899. It claimed to lead and represent peasants' interests. BANU's popularity increased in the countryside during the first decade of the twentieth century, catapulting it to power after the First World War.⁸⁹ BANU even hoped to appeal to Turkish Muslims by mobilizing the rural population on a reformist agenda that targeted the ills of misconceived modernization.

⁸⁵ D. Kosev, "Selskoto dvizhenie v Bŭlgariia v kraia na XIX vek. Osnovavaneto na BZNS i otnoshenieto na BRSDP kŭm selskia vŭпрос," *Istoricheski Pregled* 5, no. 5 (1948–49): 549–87; Krumka Sharova, "Selskite vŭlneniia protiv desiatiŭka v Rusensko prez 1900 g.," *Istoricheski Pregled* 13, no. 4 (1957): 3–45; Vladislav Topalov, "Osnovavane na Bŭlgarskiia Zemedelski Sŭiuz," *Izvestiia na Instituta za Istorii* 8 (1960): 153–209, and "Politicheskata deinost na Bŭlgarskiia Zemedelski Sŭiuz prez 1900–1901 g.," *Izvestiia na Instituta za Istorii* 10 (1962): 61–121.

⁸⁶ John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899–1923* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Topalov, "Politicheskata deinost."

⁸⁷ Avramov, *Komunalniat Kapitalizŭm*, vol. 1, 140.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 138–39.

⁸⁹ On BANU in power (depicted rather favorably), see Dimitrina Petrova, *Samo-stoiatelnoto Upravlenie na BZNS 1920–1923* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1988).

VERNACULAR MODERNIZATION AND DIVIDED CITIZENSHIP

The Bulgarian Agricultural National Union (BANU)

BANU's founders were young men from villages who had received more specialized agricultural education thanks to the expansion of the state educational system. Agrarian activists were Bulgarian-speaking, Christian men, who had typically been born and raised in villages (many in northern Bulgaria), had received specialized agricultural and/or pedagogical education, and tended to work as school teachers. They were a village teachers' elite of sorts that decided to work for the "material and moral improvement"⁹⁰ of the *zemledelets* (the farmer) by building up associations of farmers, focusing especially on smallholders. They had eclectic ideological inspirations: official ideas for the modernization of Bulgaria's agricultural production, Social Darwinism, a host of positivist ideas as well as the Russian Narodniks. One of the founding figures of the movement, the teacher, poet, and prose writer Tsanko Bakalov Tserkovski, had started his journey to agrarian activism thorough Marxism and membership in the Bulgarian Workers' Social Democratic Party.⁹¹ After the fall of Stefan Stambolov's regime, public life, press censorship, and the political process were gradually somewhat liberalized, enabling these young men to begin voicing their ideas about Bulgarian society. Their politicization coincided with the economic crisis at the century's end. Their coalescing into a political organization occurred as Bulgaria increasingly relied on loans that supported the enlarged bureaucracy and army. Agrarian activists had little interest in the irredentist and militant Bulgarian nationalism that flourished from the late 1890s onward as Macedonian revolutionary organizations based in the Ottoman Empire and in Bulgaria ever more shaped the domestic political agenda. Military spending in Bulgaria grew as hopes for territorial acquisitions rose. Agrarian activists regarded this nationalist-militarist agenda as harming the countryside. Perhaps what united them was a sense of exclusion from the political agenda which also resonated with villagers.

⁹⁰ Iurdan N. Pekarev, *Istoriia na Zemedelskoto dvizhenie v Bŭlgariia* (Dobrich: n.p., 1945), vol. 1, 35.

⁹¹ Bell, *Peasants in Power*, 21.

BANU's leaders believed that Bulgarian economic policies, especially military expenditures, were detrimental to peasants. BANU embraced official ideas about education and improved methods of cultivation but denounced the taxation policies in agriculture, the lack of cheap credit, and, according to BANU, the self-serving partisanship of political parties. BANU advocated the formation of and helped set up self-help-like agricultural associations both to educate peasants and to improve cultivation so that, BANU maintained, peasants would not be exploited by the oppressive authorities or ruined by high interest loans. The agrarian activists who created BANU called for tax reform, less emphasis on industry and military spending, less dependence on foreign loans, greater political representation for agriculturalists (*zemledeltsi*), and greater social justice.⁹² Alexander Stamboliiski, the ideologue and most important figure of BANU until his assassination in 1923, chastised governments for spending the budget on the salaries and pensions of bureaucrats, lavish banquets, and the army. BANU's founders tended to view "the city" as the personification of corrupt politicians and "nonproductive" economic practices, such as money lending. They harbored a vision for society in which agriculture enjoyed primacy over industry. The protests against the reintroduction of the tithe provided BANU with the perfect opportunity to champion its reformist agenda and over the next decade to grow into a political party wishing to represent rural Bulgaria.⁹³

In an editorial titled "Let's Get to Work," the *Zemedelsko Zname* (Agricultural Herald), which became the official newspaper of the union in 1902, pointed out that the main goal of agricultural associations was "to fight against the injustice to which farmers are subjected."⁹⁴ The newspaper did not view the agricultural credit-cooperatives as reducing peasant indebtedness and instead promoted the development of mutual self-help associations that rested on "unlimited solidarity and responsibility."⁹⁵ This was the model of the Raiffeisen cooperatives that gained popularity in Bulgaria during the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1907 a special law was promulgated which gave cooperatives clear legal definition and greater security, as well as rules for their constitution and administration. Rural indebtedness, though, remained a chronic problem.⁹⁶ The official

⁹² Ibid., 3–55.

⁹³ See Topalov, "Osnovavane," 162.

⁹⁴ "Let's Get to Work," *Zemedelsko Zname*, no. 3, 11 November 1902.

⁹⁵ *Zemedelsko Zname*, no. 20, 10 March 1903.

⁹⁶ Avramov, *Komunalniiat Kapitalizum*, vol. 3, 21–22; Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 364–67.

effort to promote cooperativism was a strategy designed both to support economic development and to provide a cushion to ameliorate its negative consequences. Where the latter goal failed, BANU filled the space by vilifying state spending while mobilizing the peasants. BANU activists viewed farmers as ignorant and therefore in need of both education and guidance on how to make their work more profitable so that they would not be mere better providers of revenue, rather they would stop allowing governments to make economic policies without considering the interests of “agricultural Bulgaria.”⁹⁷

“Politics is the method of liberation,” cofounder Dimitŭr Dragiev explained in his speech at BANU’s second congress in 1900, and by participating in politics “we want to restore the rule of the people [*narodnoto vlastelinstvo*].”⁹⁸ Therefore, according to Stamboliiski, the future lay in political organizations speaking for the interests of specific *sŭslovies* (social layers). A *sŭslovie*, in his view, encompassed people sharing a profession, an economic orientation, a lifestyle, and similar conditions of life. Society was composed of *sŭslovies* which struggled for society (*obshtestvo*) to recognize their interests while each *sŭslovie* had to recognize the interest of society. *Sŭslovie* was more inclusive than class, in Stamboliiski’s view, because class was much more bound to particular professions. The agrarian *sŭslovie* was an irreversible historical reality. Political parties, Stamboliiski argued, had become bodies seeking favors, benefits, and power without being accountable to anyone. *Sŭslovie* organizations, such as the BANU, on the other hand, took on themselves not only economic tasks but also “those cultural and political ideals, which have occupied humankind for centuries and continue to occupy us today.” These ideals, and more broadly democracy and justice, could be secure only if the different *sŭslovies* in a society strove to ensure their rights and interests in which they consistently limited each other’s power of abuse.⁹⁹ The agrarian union was engaged in politics because it consisted of “independent and conscious citizens,” remarked Stamboliiski in 1906.¹⁰⁰ Hence joining BANU held the promise of active engagement in politics for the majority of Bulgaria’s population, i.e., practicing citizenship, while also showing the path to the democratization of politics.

⁹⁷ The phrase is Pekarev’s.

⁹⁸ Dimitŭr Dragiev, *Zemedelskii sŭiuz i politikata* (Plovdiv: “Trud,” 1901), 11.

⁹⁹ Stamboliiski, *Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski*, 31–34, 36, 54–62.

¹⁰⁰ Stamboliiski, “Bŭlgarskiiat Zemedelski Naroden Sŭiuz i ‘Politikata,’” in *Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski*, 67–73.

Rhetorically, and to some degree in practice as well, BANU's agenda was strikingly inclusive. Bulgaria's Turkish Muslim peasants were considered as impoverished and oppressed as their Bulgarian Christian counterparts; as peasants making a living from agriculture, Turkish Muslims and Bulgarian Christians belonged to the same *sŭslovie*. Years later in his history of BANU, Iurdan Pekarev praised agrarian activists for convincing in 1898 even the "submissive and servile Turkish population" that nonstate agricultural associations championed the interests of cultivators and smallholders. Accordingly, Turkish Muslim peasants formed such associations in the hinterlands of two southern cities, Tatar Pazardzhik and Haskovo, even prior to the protests against the tithe.¹⁰¹

Yet Pekarev's characterization of Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria as basically an inert mass may suggest why BANU remained a political movement sensitive primarily to the plight of Bulgarian Christian peasants. His unintended condescension reflects broader official attitudes toward Muslims as hostages to tradition and hence opposed to the positive changes wrought by the modern age. Throughout the 1890s and early teens of the twentieth century, provincial governors in southern Bulgaria often described Turkish Muslims in their annual reports as unresponsive to the modernization efforts initiated by statesmen. The reason, governors insisted, lay in the inability of Muslims to accept the sovereignty of a non-Muslim ruler, which officials viewed as an example of religious fanaticism.¹⁰² Stara Zagora's governor remarked in his 1894–95 report that "most [Muslims] could not get used to the progress [*napredŭk*] in the country,"¹⁰³ and hence chose to emigrate from "modern" Bulgaria to the "backward" Ottoman Empire.

A more rigorous analysis of Pekarev's remarks will point to the fact that BANU considered Bulgarian Christian peasants to be in dire need

¹⁰¹ Pekarev, *Istoriia na Zemedelskoto*, 47.

¹⁰² *Doklad na Staro-Zagorskii okrŭzhen upravitel za sŭstoianieto na Staro-Zagorskoto okrŭzhie za vreme ot 1-i Avgust 1889 do 1-i Avgust 1890 god* (Plovdiv: "Edinstvo," 1890), 6; *Doklad za obshtoto sŭstoianie na Burgaskii okrŭg prez 1891–92 godina* (Burgas: Iv. Kiradzhiev, 1892), 7; *Doklad za obshtoto sŭstoianie na Burgaskii okrŭg prez 1892–1893*, 23; *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Plovdivskii okrŭg prez 1892–93 godini* (Plovdiv: "Edinstvo," 1893), 16; *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Haskovskii okrŭg prez 1892–1893 godina* (Haskovo: A. Mazenov, 1893), 3; *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Burgaskoto okrŭzhie prez 1901/902 godina* (Burgas: Khr. V. Velchev & C-ie, 1902); *Izlozhenie za sŭstoianieto na Burgaskoto okrŭzhie prez 1903/1904 god.* (Burgas: G. P. Ivanov, 1904).

¹⁰³ *Izlozhenie St.-Zagorskii okr. upravitel prez 1894–95*, 13.

of enlightenment as well. BANU worked to mobilize peasants by insisting on the importance of education as well as rural solidarity to rectify what they considered peasants' ignorance, passivity, and political weakness. The work of mobilization—in print or orally—however, took place in Bulgarian only. Appeals to peasants to unite and support BANU often invoked Christian sensibilities and cultural motifs. In an open letter to peasants (dated 1899), Dimitŭr Dragiev (a recent convert to Protestant Christianity), drew much of his persuasive arsenal from references to the New Testament, stressing Christian ideas of morality to justify his opposition to the tithe.¹⁰⁴ Pekarev and Stamboliiski described the process of building agrarian associations and rural solidarity as the resurrection of justice and frequently likened it to Jesus' resurrection.¹⁰⁵ Stamboliiski equated participation in the "agricultural cause" to communion at Easter.¹⁰⁶

But nonreligious rhetoric emphasized the Bulgarian "essence" of agriculture as well. Some of BANU's most outspoken criticism against the tithe explicitly compared the tithe to the "Ottoman yoke" and the Bulgarian politicians seeking to enforce the tax to oppressive "Turkish beys."¹⁰⁷ Instead of the "Turkish whip lashing our necks," Dragiev wrote in his *Call to the Bulgarian Farmers*, "now the Bulgarian whip lashes them, but it hurts as well."¹⁰⁸ This continued oppression "since our Liberation until this day," Pekarev explained in *Nova Borba* (New fight) in 1898, served the needs of "all sorts of people" who had molded farmers like "dough" to "the shape that suits them."¹⁰⁹ In 1904 Stamboliiski published a piece in *Zemedelsko Zname* which was even more explicit in this unreflexive conflation between present injustice and Ottoman past:

A quarter of a century has passed since we started living as a free nation, since we obtained self-rule. Yes! So many years have passed since we began feeling the pride of our freedom. Alas!... Freedom, free life, but only for a few; for the majority life has not become

¹⁰⁴ Dimitŭr Dragiev, *Otvoreno Pismo do gospoda izbiratelite v Starozagorskata okoliia* (Stara Zagora: "Ivan Gutenberg," 1899).

¹⁰⁵ Pekarev, *Istoriia na Zemedelskoto*, 23; Stamboliiski, *Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski*, 45.

¹⁰⁶ Stamboliiski, *Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski*, 45.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 62–65.

¹⁰⁸ Dimitŭr Dragiev, *Glas kŭm bŭlgarskite zemedeltsi* (n.p: n.d.), 7.

¹⁰⁹ Pekarev, *Istoriia na Zemedelskoto*, 35. Pekarev's *Istoriia* is basically a compilation of newspaper excerpts and speeches; the quotation here is taken from an editorial published in *Nova Borba* on 25 December 1898.

better, but is still as difficult as it used to be before the Liberation. The only difference is that now instead of the *aga* with the *chalma* we have masters with hats, who are more Turks than the Turks themselves. It is shameful to cry for the yoke, but praising the current “freedom” is ludicrous!¹¹⁰

Stamboliiski also proudly wrote that “the agrarian union, this is the conscious Bulgarian nation [*narod*].”¹¹¹

The newspaper *Nov Vek* (New Century), which was not sympathetic to agrarian populism, invoked the “Turkish spahii [sipahi]”¹¹² to show how fundamentally “un-Bulgarian” and “un-modern” this method of taxation was. Prominent public figures and politicians around the turn of the century also emphasized the un-progressive character of tithing.¹¹³ Their concerns did not stem from identification with the plight of peasants, but rather from fear of Bulgaria slipping into the putative Ottoman backwardness. In a 1900 article entitled “The Tithe in the Past and Now” veteran Eastern Rumelian politician and lawyer Stefan Bobchev argued that the tithe was an old-fashioned method of taxation inconsistent with modern economic development.¹¹⁴ Lawyer Nikola Piperov also opposed the tithe, emphasizing its economic irrationality. He wrote that Bulgarian governments had preserved the taxation system “inherited from the Turks” but made it “heavier” and “more unjust.” Taxes in Bulgaria thus not only carried the imprint of Turkish regression but were, also according to him, unfair as well as economically unsound because they could not generate capital “which brings with it culture and civilization.”¹¹⁵ In other words,

¹¹⁰ The article is entitled “Let’s Wake Up!” and was published in *Zemedelsko Zname* in the 8 May 1904 issue. See the text in Stamboliiski, *Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski*, 62–65.

¹¹¹ Stamboliiski, *Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski*, 77–80.

¹¹² *Nov Vek*, no. 110, 29 November/11 December 1899. Sipahi was the member of the standing cavalry in the early modern Ottoman Empire (Anatolia and the Balkans especially) who was given a *timar*, i.e., nonhereditary land grant in exchange for military service as well as administrative functions.

¹¹³ Stefan S. Bobchev, “Desiatŭkŭt (oshurŭt) niakoga i sega [The tithe in the past and now],” *Bŭlgarska Sbirka* 7, no. 5 (1900): 320–27; G. D. Nachovich, *Nia-kolko strani si po zemedeliето v Bŭlgariia i stranstvo* (Sofia: Pechatnitsa na Iv. P. Daskalov i C-ie, 1902); N. Piperov, “Danŭtsite v Bŭlgariia razgledani ot gledna tochka na pravoto i ikonomicheskta nauka,” *Misŭl* 11, no. 3 (1901): 200–207, and no. 5–6 (1901): 327–53.

¹¹⁴ S. S. B. (Stefan Savov Bobchev), “Desetŭkŭt (oshurŭt) nekoga i sega.”

¹¹⁵ Piperov, “Danŭtsite v Bŭlgariia,” 330–32, 350, 352.

this tacit correlation between socioeconomic ills and the detrimental Ottoman legacy which hindered Bulgarian progress informed the attitudes both of statesmen and their critics when it came to the Ottoman past. Such attitudes applied to its “remnants,” especially Turkish Muslims, making it quite impossible for an agenda of social reform to cross ethno-religious boundaries. At the same time, this automatic link between Ottoman and “uncivilized” made it imperative for survival, from the viewpoint of a younger generation of Turkish Muslims living in Bulgaria, to show that they were not mere vestiges of the imperial past.

MUSLIM REFORMERS AND YOUNG TURKS

By the mid- to late 1890s Turkish Muslims were also becoming discontented both with their tacit identification with putative Ottoman backwardness as well as with perceived manifestations of Turkish Muslims lagging behind Bulgarian Christians. It was not BANU that succeeded in mobilizing rural Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria. They found their own young and educated Turkish Muslim men eager to usher the Muslim population—rural as well as urban—into the modern age. These Turkish Muslim reformers, like the agrarian activists, began voicing grievances and articulating an agenda for reform—especially via newspapers—after the relaxation of censorship and the relative liberalization of politics following the end of Stambolov’s regime.¹¹⁶ Their growth into a modernizing reform movement was also helped by the arrival of Ottoman émigrés whose ideas of constitutional government had forced them to flee the oppressive regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II (the Hamidian regime). In fact, the European territories of the Ottoman Empire as well as its former dominions of Bulgaria and Romania became the most prominent centers of the Ottoman opposition, known as the Young Turks.¹¹⁷

In a way, the Young Turks were the product of the expanding state educational system in the late Ottoman Empire and especially of secondary education under Abdülhamid II. Most of the members of the Young Turk movement were born roughly between the mid-1860s and mid-

¹¹⁶ Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 99.

¹¹⁷ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), *passim*.

1870s,¹¹⁸ that is, during a time when the Tanzimat had already changed many features of the older Ottoman state. These changes, facilitated in no small measure by European capital, also brought to Ottoman society a host of new political and economic ideas as well as cultural practices.¹¹⁹ The Young Turks were the prime beneficiaries of the establishment of secular education that borrowed from the curriculum in math, science, and history that was being developed in Europe, including new methods of instruction going beyond rote memorization. These young Muslim men usually attended the medical, civil service, and military post-secondary schools that proliferated in the empire; some became employed in the bureaucracy.¹²⁰ Especially troublesome for them was the murder of Ahmed Midhat Pasha in 1884, the governor of the first pilot Tanzimat province of Danube (Tuna) and a principal author of the suspended Ottoman constitution.¹²¹

The idea for a check on central authority went back to the late 1850s and 1860s when discontent emerged throughout the empire with the growing power of the Porte where the high-level Tanzimat bureaucrats conceived of reform measures and orchestrated change without any real input from provincial authorities, the ulema, or the army. This discontent was most cogently expressed since the mid-1860s by a group that named itself the Patriotic Alliance, also known as the Young Ottomans. They blamed Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha, who switched between them the offices of the Grand Vizierate and the Foreign Ministry, for leading an oligarchy of statesmen which was removed from society, thus creating inadequate policies.¹²² Namık Kemal, the foremost Young Ottoman political theorist,

¹¹⁸ Erik J. Zürcher, "Who Were the Young Turks?," in *The Young Turk Legacy and National Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 99.

¹¹⁹ See especially M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 72–108.

¹²⁰ Zürcher, "Who Were the Young Turks?," 97–99. On the development of education in the late Ottoman Empire, see S. Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1839–1908: Islamicization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); see also Benjamin Fortna, *The Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹²¹ Zürcher, "Who Were the Young Turks?," 97; Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 500–501.

¹²² Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 112; Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 10–11.

fused Enlightenment conceptions of liberty and representative government with Islamic ideas of justice and political consultation to elaborate Ottoman notions of freedom (*hürriyet*), constitutionalism, and nationality that was focused on the Turkish Ottomans.¹²³

The Young Turks, comprising a younger generation, inherited the Young Ottoman goal for limiting central power. They were also deeply concerned about the longevity of the empire especially after the Treaty of Berlin, which confirmed the geopolitical trend of Ottoman expulsion from Europe. Though present from the beginning, Turkish nationalist inclinations were downplayed in the intellectual-political vision of the organization that came to be known as the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). As the CUP's ideas transformed from an intellectual critique to a political movement (in the process also loosing sympathizers) conspiring to overthrow the Hamidian regime as well as to protect the Ottoman Empire from Great Power interferences, Turkish nationalism gradually became the ideology that provided the CUP with meaning, purpose, and plan of action.¹²⁴ Emphasis on Turkish and Turkist nationalist themes was also intended to appeal to Turcophone Muslim populations that had become minorities in places like Bulgaria as well as to attract Turkic populations in the Caucasus.¹²⁵ Turkish nationalism was also strengthened among those CUP exiles in the Balkans who witnessed the veritable civil war unfolding in Ottoman Macedonia among rival Christian nationalist groups without regard for Turkish and Albanian Muslims.¹²⁶ The settlement of Young Turk exiles in Bulgaria must have strengthened the sense of urgency to save the Ottoman homeland because Bulgarian politicians and a sizeable section of the army were engaged in the struggle for Macedonia and also because Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria lived with discrimination. Young Turk émigrés became actively involved with the budding Muslim reform movement in Bulgaria.¹²⁷

¹²³ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 283–336.

¹²⁴ The Committee of Union and Progress was renamed as the Committee of Progress and Union in 1905. This name lasted until the 1908 revolution and subsequently the previous name was restored. Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 17–32, 208–12; Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 147–49.

¹²⁵ Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 295, and *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 210.

¹²⁶ See Yosmaoglu, *Blood Ties*, *passim*.

¹²⁷ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 107–43; Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 99.

Bulgaria's Muslim reformers were roughly of the same generation as the Young Turks, having been born a few years before or after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78, and they came of age in the emergent Bulgarian nation-state. The encounter between these two groups transformed both, prompting Young Turks in Bulgaria to articulate an ideology and use a political vocabulary which reflected local conditions.¹²⁸ Young Turk assimilation of materialist and Social Darwinist ideas coupled with their admiration of science (to which they credited the rise of European power), led many Young Turks to regard religion as antithetical to science and as an obstacle to human progress.¹²⁹ Rejection of Islam in Bulgaria, however, could have been regarded as an attack on the Muslim population which was in any case stigmatized as backward and fanatical.¹³⁰ More generally, Balkan Muslims either lived among sizeable Christian populations or in Christian nation-states, so Islam provided a basis for solidarity. Thus, CUP branches in the Balkans adopted a pragmatic, conciliatory attitude toward religion in order to attract as many local Muslims as possible and to disarm criticism from the ulema.¹³¹ To convey their ideas the Young Turk press in Bulgaria relied on passages from *hadiths*, excerpts from the Quran, and examples from Islamic history while stressing the rationality of certain Islamic practices, Muslim tolerance as well as Islam's moral superiority to Christianity or European civilization.¹³²

Opposition to the Hamidian regime, which united the different factions within the CUP, was also muted among Bulgaria's Muslims. Partly this had to do with the fact that under Ottoman pressure the Bulgarian authorities periodically clamped down on Young Turk activities and publications. Bulgaria could use these actions as leverage in negotiations with the Porte to obtain permission for establishing bishoprics of the Bulgarian Exarchate in Macedonia or for opening trade agencies in major cities in Macedonia or Thrace. For example, the authorities delayed publication permission to the pro-Young Turk newspaper *Muvazene* because the Exarchate had received new Ottoman permits for bishoprics in Macedonia. Perhaps more importantly, local Muslims looked to the sultan and the

¹²⁸ Methodieva, "Reform, Politics, and Culture," 105, 112.

¹²⁹ Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 11–12, 18, 20–22.

¹³⁰ Methodieva, "Reform, Politics, and Culture," 113–14.

¹³¹ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 124; see also *Balkan*, no. 68, 6 Teşrin-i Evvel 1322 (19 November 1906).

¹³² Methodieva, "Reform, Politics, and Culture," 114.

Porte as protectors.¹³³ The country's Turkish Muslim population routinely sent petitions with grievances about harassment to the Porte and occasionally to European consuls. This was especially so when the guerilla actions of the Macedonian revolutionary organizations expanded, causing violent outbursts of misguided Bulgarian patriotism, heavy-handed police behavior, and clashes in border regions.¹³⁴ However, there was also a strand of opinion among the Young Turk movement in Bulgaria (in addition to *Muvazene*) which ardently opposed Abdülhamid, holding him responsible for the Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 as well as for the principality's annexation of Eastern Rumelia, events that were considered the root cause of Muslim hardship.¹³⁵

Muslim reformers in Bulgaria were discontented with the condition of the Muslim population for which they blamed both the Bulgarian state as well as Muslims themselves, especially those members of the ulema and the older established elites who did not identify with the modernizing agenda of the reformers. Unlike BANU activists, the Muslim reformers were not explicitly concerned whether official economic policy privileged industry or agriculture. This was so even though Muslims owned arable lands and overwhelmingly made a living from agriculture. Many were actively engaged in rice and tobacco cultivation. Plovdiv Turkish Muslim merchants dominated the rice trade in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries while Muslims were prominent owners of tobacco factories and warehouses in several northern and southern Bulgarian cities. But this was precisely the established post-1878 Muslim elites that held the reins of power among Muslims and whom the reformers ultimately wished to displace from leadership.¹³⁶ They worried in fact that Muslims' reliance on agriculture, especially on manual labor and traditional methods of cultivation would lead to impoverishment because industrialization led to the mechanization of labor. Hence the real question for reformers was "Will the Turks Progress?" as the title of an article from the Ottoman Turkish-language newspaper *Muvazene* asked.¹³⁷

¹³³ Ibid., 113, 125, 177, 193.

¹³⁴ See, for instance, TsDIA f. 321k, op. 1, a. e. 1670, l. 1–11, 35–37; f. 176k, op. 1, a. e. 2043.

¹³⁵ Methodieva, "Reform, Politics, and Culture," 121–22.

¹³⁶ For a discussion of the conflicts between the reformers—sympathizers with the Young Turks, in particular—and their opponents, see Methodieva, "Reform, Politics, and Culture," 89–94, 307–32.

¹³⁷ See the discussion on what Muslim reformers identified as the causes of their problems in Methodieva, "Reform, Politics, and Culture," 248–58; my reference here is to a newspaper article mentioned on p. 250.

Muslim reformers worried that Turkish Muslims lagged behind Bulgarian Christians (as well as other peoples of the Ottoman Empire) in modern education and thus ultimately in the society. Education was central element in the ideology of the Muslim reforms, a solution to most social ills.¹³⁸ The newspaper *Muvazene* whose founder and publisher, Ali Fehmi from Plovdiv, was a member of the Young Turk organization, often published articles on the importance of secular learning.¹³⁹ *Muvazene* agitated for education and progress among Muslims, alarmed by the fact that Bulgarian schools prepared youngsters for the modern age much better than Turkish schools. Tensions ran high between reformers, particularly those identified with the Young Turk movement, and their opponents because each side wished to mold the curriculum for Turkish Muslim schools.¹⁴⁰ In an article entitled “Why Do We Stay Ignorant?,” *Muvazene* advised its “brothers” not to follow blindly local authority figures, who were not interested in those lower than them acquiring education; they only wanted servants and laborers, the newspaper warned. The remedy was education, especially in villages where schools were too few since, according to *Muvazene*, many important Muslims were not interested in spending money on education. The author of the article chided his “religious brothers [*din kardeşleri*]” for being too traditional and relying too much on God; “Open your eyes,” he urged, “look at schools,” and “read to your children.”¹⁴¹ In another article, “Sciences and Education,” *Muvazene* reminded its readers that “everything in this world requires money [*dünyada her şeyi para ile olur*]” but also “intelligence,” which is acquired in schools.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Muslims in Bulgaria had the lowest literacy rates in comparison with other religious groups. See the table from *Statisticheski Godisnik 1909* included in Methodieva’s dissertation, pp. 244 and 254–57.

¹³⁹ Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 179. Exemplary in this respect are: “Ulüm ve Maarif,” *Muvazene*, no. 10, 8 Cemaziyül’ahır 1315 (3 November 1897); “Ulüm ve Maarif,” *Muvazene*, no. 18, 16 Şaban 1315 (6 January 1898); “Ulüm ve Maarif,” *Muvazene*, no. 25 January 1898; “Ulüm ve Maarif,” *Muvazene*, no. 306, 5 Ramazan 1321 (25 November 1903); and also *Muvazene*, no. 25, 3 Şevval 1315 (25 February 1898).

¹⁴⁰ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 123; *Balkan*, no. 37, 13 Ağustos 1322 (26 August 1906), no. 45, 3 Şaban 1322 (22 September 1906).

¹⁴¹ “Niçin cahil kalıyoruz [Why do we stay ignorant?], *Muvazene*, no. 287, 20 Rebiülahir 1321 (16 July 1903).

¹⁴² “Ulüm ve Maarif,” [Sciences and education], *Muvazene*, no. 25, 3 Şevval 1315 (25 February 1898).

In general, *Muvazene* became the main discussion forum of the emerging reform agenda, opening a special rubric for letters from the readers, responding and commenting occasionally in editorials, and offering steps that Muslims could take to improve their situation in Bulgaria. It worked to develop a following especially among teachers and students as future activists in the reform movement. They organized themselves into an organization and held congresses devoted to curriculum and instruction.¹⁴³ *Muvazene* urged its readers to reconsider the current practices of agriculture in ways reminiscent of the reports of the Bulgarian provincial governors,¹⁴⁴ “Our ancestors have left to us agriculture. It is a craft. As for the purposes of agriculture at present, we must act with respect toward what these honorable men have left to us.... We cultivate wheat the way our ancestors did.... But the experience of these honorable men has reached its limit.” The article suggested that the time had to come to think about wealth and the value of agricultural production. As the author put it, “Wealth does not bring harm [*Zenginliğinden zarar gelmez*],” but “All of this has not come to our minds at all ... in a few years or in a few days, what will happen to us?” Much like the agrarian activists, the newspaper advocated mutual help through associations to uplift rural Muslims. The article is not explicit whether this call for association was only a propagation of the general idea of association among agricultural producers as then advocated by Bulgarian officials or whether it was an indirect appeal for association among those who sympathized with the Young Turk movement.

The reformers attributed deficiencies in education as well as the mismanagement of community affairs, especially the squandering of *vakıfs*, to the established elites and the religious hierarchy which kept Muslims in ignorance.¹⁴⁵ As a result, inadequacy in education and leadership deepened the legal and political inequalities between Muslims and Christians in Bulgaria.¹⁴⁶ On one hand *Muvazene* and *Balkan* (the other major reformist and pro-Young Turk newspaper)¹⁴⁷ insisted that improve-

¹⁴³ Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 186–90, 284–88.

¹⁴⁴ *Muvazene*, no. 3, 18 Rebiülahir 1315 (16 September 1897).

¹⁴⁵ Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 186, 316.

¹⁴⁶ *Muvazene*, no. 276, 6 Safer 1321 (4 May 1903); *Balkan*, no. 30, 23 Temmuz 1322 (5 August 1906).

¹⁴⁷ Different pro-Young Turks newspapers in Bulgaria identified with rival factions of the CUP/CPU, so there were also purely personal conflicts among them. See Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture.”

ment of the condition of Muslims in Bulgaria was above all the duty of Muslims themselves. “Muslims in Bulgaria are in a pitiful condition” and “many emigrate” but schools could not be reformed if “Turks leave their homeland [and] the graves of their ancestors.” That is, Muslims had an obligation to stay and search for ways to renegotiate a favorable place in and reconnect to the new postimperial, national political structure that governed “their homeland,” even though they were treated like foreigners. “If we work in our homeland [*vatan*] there will be profit,” *Muvazene* concluded.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, the reformers claimed the authority to educate, guide, and ultimately “save” the Muslim community from the perceived dual oppression of unprogressive elites and Bulgarian governments. The conflict between pro-Young Turk reformers and their opponents was both ideological and personal, a power struggle for leadership of the Muslim community.¹⁴⁹ A case in point is the conflict over *vakıf* management which unfolded in Plovdiv in 1903. *Muvazene*’s editor Ali Fehmi launched a relentless campaign against the board that, according to the principality’s Temporary Regulations of Muslim Religious Affairs, was in charge of *vakıfs* in the district.¹⁵⁰ The board had worked very hard a few years earlier to expel Ali Fehmi from Plovdiv. He had taken *Muvazene* to Varna, a port city on the northern Black Sea coast with a sizeable Muslim population.¹⁵¹ Upon returning to Plovdiv in 1903 he was elected to the local criminal court. It is not clear if he initiated the investigation of the *vakıf* board as a revenge. Nonetheless, *Muvazene* published a series of scathing articles devoted to corruption in the management of *vakıfs*. This campaign coincided with complaints by Plovdiv Turkish Muslims to the authorities that the board covered up serious financial losses among *vakıfs*.¹⁵² *Muvazene* was critical of religious officials, the *müftü* especially, urging people to keep their eyes open for lies and corruption.¹⁵³ The Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs got involved as well. In the spirit of its long-

¹⁴⁸ *Muvazene*, no. 14, 14 Recep 1315 (9 December 1897).

¹⁴⁹ Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 182, 187, 259–60.

¹⁵⁰ See “Vremenni Pravila,” articles 14 and 15.

¹⁵¹ On the distribution of Muslims (Turks, Tatars, and Roma) in major Bulgarian cities, see R. J. Crampton, “The Turks in Bulgaria,” in *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 72–76.

¹⁵² Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 315–16.

¹⁵³ See “Bulgaristan Vakıf Batakhaneleri ve Şurekası,” [Vakıfs in Bulgaria: dens of thieves and wastefulness], *Muvazene*, no. 271, 26 Zilhicce 1320 (26 March 1903).

standing interference in *vakıf* affairs, the ministry mandated an audit and issued a circular to all *vakıf* boards in the principality to hold elections. Meanwhile, the Ottoman representative tried to appease the polarized Muslim population of Plovdiv in order to prevent official involvement in the affair. He failed. The prosecutor appointed an investigative commission that consisted of two Bulgarian Christians and one Turkish Muslim (Ali Fehmi).¹⁵⁴ As we will see in the last chapter, these types of battles over the resources of the endowment intensified especially in the interwar period, as did the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs.

The conflict over the *vakıf* board in Plovdiv was ultimately a struggle for control of endowment resources and hence for the power to shape the position of Muslims in Bulgaria. *Muvazene* had staked a claim of leadership early on by explaining that every government had the duty to look after the interest of its people¹⁵⁵ which by implication neither the Ottoman nor the Bulgarian government was doing. In its very first issue *Muvazene* had defined one of its goals as helping the advancement in ideas and thought of the Muslim youth in Bulgaria, so that Muslims could acquire a “civilized position [*vaziyet-i medeniye*]” in the society thereby also attaining “public equality [*müsavat-ı umumiye*].” Muslims could do so “without establishing animosity toward” themselves.¹⁵⁶

Almost a decade later, the newspaper *Balkan* urged Muslims to look after the “good” and “progress” of their “nation.”¹⁵⁷ In addition to protecting themselves from ignorance (*cahillikten kurtarmak*), the newspaper advised Muslims to unite and always think about their personal interest together with that of the “nation [*millet*].” *Balkan* warned readers that political partisanship (read participating in politics from the established Bulgarian parties) was extremely harmful to Muslims. By splintering their loyalties among various Muslims belonging to different parties, “Muslims will get destroyed day by day.”¹⁵⁸ When Muslims were not torn by partisanship, *Balkan* argued, they took care of the issues that were truly important, such as schools, the office of the *müftü*, and *vakıfs*.¹⁵⁹ Again we see here, just like in Eastern Rumelia, the tension between group belonging

¹⁵⁴ Methodeiva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 317.

¹⁵⁵ *Muvazene*, no. 14, 14 Recep 1315 (9 December 1897).

¹⁵⁶ *Muvazene*, no. 1, 4 Rebiülahir 1315 (2 September 1897).

¹⁵⁷ *Balkan*, no. 37, 13 Ağustos 1322 (26 August 1906).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ *Balkan*, no. 45, 9 Eylül 1322 (22 September 1906).

and individual politicization which was a central feature of post-Ottoman nation-states. *Balkan* did not absolve Bulgarian governments of responsibility; they had to act with justice and safeguard the rights of Muslims. The “Christian parties” must not use “tricks” to beat the Muslim ones in every single election and then keep their gains to themselves, the newspaper protested. And it insisted that Turkish had to be made an official language along with Bulgarian.¹⁶⁰ In other words, Turkish Muslims had to mobilize as a nation existing within the Bulgarian nation-state. We will see the consequences of this vision in the next two chapters.

¹⁶⁰ *Balkan*, no. 30, 23 Temmuz 1322 (5 August 1906).

CHAPTER SIX

Land, Nation, Minority

By the outbreak of the Young Turk Revolution and the proclamation of Bulgarian independence Muslim reformers had become committed to building modern identity for Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria. These efforts were stalled during the Balkan Wars and the First World War. Then Bulgarian governments experienced dramatic moments of elation and depression. On their way to Ottoman Edirne in the First Balkan War (1912) the Bulgarian army and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church forcibly converted the Pomaks to Christianity in a failed attempt to nationalize territory and people.¹ In the Second Balkan War (1913), Bulgaria's former allies and the Ottoman Empire compelled the country to surrender its gains, which it unsuccessfully tried to restore during the First World War. After six years of war, the country emerged humiliated, financially drained, and burdened by postwar reparations. Additionally, Bulgaria became home to Bulgarian Christian refugees from the Ottoman Empire which, like Bulgaria, had also sided with the losing side of the Great War, the Central Powers.

¹ On the wartime policies of forced assimilation, see the compilation of official documents published in Velichko Georgiev and Staiko Trifonov, eds., *Pokrǔstvaneto na bŭlgarite mokhamedani, 1912–1913* (Sofia: Akademichno izd-vo “Prof. Marin Drinov,” 1995). See also Fatme Myuhtar-May, “Pomak Christianization (*Pokrastvane*) in Bulgaria during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913,” in *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013), 316–60; as well as Neriman Ersoy-Hacısalıhoğlu, “Bulgaria’s Policy toward Muslims during the Balkan Wars,” in *War and Nationalism*, 361–70.

Thus the Muslim reform movement, and Turkish Muslims more broadly, in postwar Bulgaria found themselves in a dramatically altered international and domestic political context which included border changes, refugee crises, population exchanges, national minorities protection treaties, and, most importantly, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire followed by the creation of the Turkish Republic.² During the period between the two world wars Bulgarian central, provincial, and local authorities almost invariably linked Turkish Muslims to the ascent of the neighboring Turkish Republic that embarked on fast-paced modernization and nationalization of former Ottoman Muslims. Particularly since the mid-1930 as another global war seemed likely, Bulgarian governments came to suspect Turkish irredentism in any expression of Turkish national sentiment in Bulgaria. They regarded the spread of Turkish nationalism among Bulgaria's Muslims as a threat to Bulgaria's own irredentist aspirations. By the outbreak of the Second World War, as this chapter shows, national sovereignty and the ethno-religious homogeneity of a piece of land had become mutually constitutive. Land—private, communal, state, *vakıf*—became the material and symbolic resource of striving for an ever-elusive security. As Bulgarian Christian refugees from Ottoman-cum-Turkish territory poured into southern Bulgaria, the country's Turkish Muslim citizens once again faced loss of land and pressure to emigrate. This time Turkish statesmen selectively desired Turkish Muslim immigrants to build their young nation-state. Bulgaria's and Turkey's schemes for managing populations in service of the nation intersected in deleterious ways.

² For histories of these population transfers, see Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919–1922*, 2nd ed. (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1998), and Stephen P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey* (New York: Macmillan, 1932). For the broader social implications of these massive population movements, see Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsions That Forged Modern Greece and Turkey* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*. For the postwar national minority regime, see C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968 [1934]); for a broader historical context and how the concept of minority functioned in practice, see also Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

NATIONALIZING TERRITORY AFTER THE WARS: THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

Diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the newly created Republic of Turkey were established in 1925 by the terms of the Ankara Accords. Resolving problems arising from Muslim and Christian migrations between the two countries was a central issue to the accords. On one hand, in the newly established Turkish Republic Balkan Muslim refugees and immigrants were often settled on the lands vacated by Ottoman Christians. Likewise, Bulgarian Christian refugees and emigrants from the Ottoman Empire were often settled in Bulgaria on lands vacated

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by Muslims. On the other hand, migration was not orderly despite efforts on both sides to control it; loss of land and property without compensation remained a lasting source of grievance for Turkish Muslims as well as for Bulgarian Christians.³

Refugee settlement was a persistent challenge for Bulgarian governments in the 1920s and early 1930s. A major problem in that regard was increased competition for fertile agricultural land. Hence, in addition to settling Christian refugees on lands vacated by emigrating Muslims, Bulgarian governments worked to increase the availability of quality cultivable land through a variety of legislative initiatives. When the Bulgarian Agricultural National Union (BANU) formed its first government in late October 1919 it had two tasks: to sign the highly unpopular Neuilly Peace Treaty and to conduct land reform to ensure that farmers had enough land to make a living.

In their tenure, interrupted by Alexander Stamboliiski's assassination and a coup on 9 June 1923, the agrarians pursued a determined policy of transforming land tenure in Bulgaria, a legacy that outlived BANU's government. The hallmark of BANU's legislative efforts was a law that aimed to redistribute land for the benefit of the agriculturally productive smallholder, the Law for Labor Property in Land (*Zakon za Trudovata Pozemlena Sobstvenost*).⁴ In proposing the bill to the National Assembly, BANU emphasized its goal to promote social justice in the primarily agricultural Bulgarian society by making sure that cultivable land belonged above all to farmers. The bill planned to increase the plot size of owners who made a living from agriculture and to appropriate landless cultivators by taking land from larger landowners (300 ares or more) as well as from unused state and monastery lands.⁵

Some Bulgarian scholars in the postsocialist period have argued that BANU's legislative measures expanded and solidified a trend whereby

³ The same holds true for Greeks and Turks who were part of the population exchange, though in this case, decades after the events, nostalgia for the lost homeland has also set in. See Clark, *Twice a Stranger*.

⁴ I borrow the English translation of the law from John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliiski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899–1923* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 165.

⁵ See the motives for this law presented to the National Assembly in February 1921, excerpts of which are reprinted in the compilation of laws published in Evgeni Iochev, *Zakonodatelstvoto v tsarstvo Bŭlgariia (1879–1944 g.): konstitutsiia, zakoni, motivi, dokladi, ukazi, naredbi, naredbi-zakoni* (Sofia: Fondatsiia "Otvoreno Obshtestvo," [1999]).

political parties conceded to peasant demands for tax relief, perpetuation of unprofitable smallholding landownership, and cooperative agriculture in exchange for votes.⁶ Historian Roumen Daskalov writes that BANU looked for a “third way” model of economic development that valued cooperativism buttressed by state credit that was made available through the Bulgarian Agricultural Bank. Cooperativism aimed to offset the negative consequences of capitalism in the countryside thus foregrounding the socialist cooperativism after 1945.⁷ Economist Roumen Avramov offers a bleaker interpretation of cooperativism (both on the Left and on the Right) in Bulgaria, contending that it bred “communal capitalism” that ultimately stifled individual entrepreneurship and nurtured authoritarian political culture.⁸

In this chapter I suggest that BANU’s rather paternalistic land policies enabled subsequent governments to use land policy to manage Bulgaria’s Turkish Muslim minority at a time when other Balkan states and Turkey also linked national homogeneity to sovereignty. Many of the refugees from Ottoman Macedonia and Thrace, from Greece, as well as emigrants from Turkey first settled in southern Bulgaria. It—and especially newly acquired territories like the Kŭrdzhali region—became a battleground for land. A complicating factor for refugee absorption was the type of soil and land-ownership patterns in many parts of southern Bulgaria: mountainous, suitable for vineyards, orchards, and tobacco or swampy, suitable for rice rather than for the staple grains while small, spread-out plots made cultivation labor intensive.⁹ Who owned land in this borderland region was of paramount importance to state authorities and Turkish Muslims alike. In short, as I show in this chapter, the fate of refugees and minorities became entwined in the interwar years.

⁶ See Diana Mishkova, “Modernization and Political Elites in the Balkans before the First World War,” *East European Politics and Societies* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 63–89, esp. 83–89; Roumen Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto Obshtestvo 1878–1939 (Tom 1: Dŭrzhava, Politika, Ikonomika)* (Sofia: IK “Gutenberg,” 2005), 177–81, and *Bŭlgarskoto Obshtestvo 1878–1939 (Tom 2: Naselenie, Obshtestvo, Kultura)* (Sofia: IK “Gutenberg,” 2005), 257–58.

⁷ Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto Obshtestvo 1878–1939 (Tom 2)*, 259–60. On the intellectual lineage of socialism in Bulgaria as well as its political manifestation, see Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009).

⁸ Avramov, *Stopanskiiat XX Vek*.

⁹ Tobacco cultivation did help with the accommodation of refugees, as Neuburger has recently argued. See Mary C. Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

Post–World War I Christian refugee settlement was in some respects the culmination of a longer continuum of integrating Christian emigrants from the Ottoman Empire into its successor states in the Balkans. Bulgarian Christians from Ottoman Macedonia and Thrace immigrated to the Principality of Bulgaria especially after the suppression of the 1903 Ilinden Uprising in Ottoman Macedonia and the subsequent escalating violence in that region.¹⁰ By 1907 the immigration of Christian Bulgarian refugees had begun worrying Bulgarian diplomats in Istanbul as well as the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs. The problem was that immigrants remained registered as Ottoman subjects and thus liable for taxes that they did not pay but which their remaining relatives had to bear. Quite likely they turned to the diplomats for help since the Bulgarian diplomatic agency noted that the principality could not simply pay up or loan cash.¹¹

The Balkan Wars and the subsequent Great War ushered much greater Christian and Muslim population displacement as well as problems of settlement and property compensation.¹² In the fall of 1913 a joint Bulgarian–Ottoman commission met in Edirne to decide on the fate of refugees in the Thracian region. By the terms of the resulting Edirne Accord (2 November 1913) the two states approved mutual population exchanges. Bulgarian Christians from the Ottoman province of Edirne (two districts in particular) were to be settled in the Bulgarian villages vacated by Turkish Muslims while the latter would move into properties of the former.¹³ Bulgaria agreed to pay 50 percent of the price of lands taken from Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria’s pre–Balkan Wars borders. By the terms of the Ankara Accords Bulgaria and Turkey agreed not to inhibit the voluntary

¹⁰ Staiko Trifonov, *Bŭlgarskoto Natsionalno-Osvoboditelno Dvizhenie v Trakiia 1919–1934* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1988); James Frusetta, “Bulgaria’s Macedonia: Nation-Building and State-Building: Centralization and Autonomy in Pirin Macedonia, 1903–1952” (PhD diss., University of Maryland College Park, 2006).

¹¹ TsDIA, f. 176k, op. 1, a. e. 2734, l. 21–22, 303.

¹² On the displacement of Muslims from the Balkans, see Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995).

¹³ Left unresolved, however, including by the 1925 Ankara Accords, was the status of Bulgarian Christians who had resided in other Ottoman provinces and had emigrated prior to the First Balkan War as well as the fate of Turkish Muslims who had resided in territories that Bulgaria acquired due to the Balkan wars; see Kalina Peeva, “Ankarskite Spogodbi—Diplomaticheski Uspekh ili Otsŭplenie ot Bŭlgarskite Interesi,” *Istorichesko Bŭdeshte* 1–2 (2006): 129–31.

emigration of Bulgarian Christians from Turkey and of Turkish Muslims from Bulgaria, leaving it to the emigrants' discretion what to do with their immovable properties. The Bulgarian diplomat S. Radev did not like this provision because it meant that Bulgaria could not create reciprocity between the treatment of Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria and Bulgarian Christians in Turkey.¹⁴ The latter were rapidly diminishing (along with other Christians) while the Turkish Muslim population in Bulgaria was a little over half a million (see Table 1).¹⁵ The Bulgarian diplomats managed to convince their Turkish colleagues that Turkish emigrants had to sell their immovable property within two years of leaving Bulgaria.

Radev could not prevail, however, on an agreement whereby Turkish Muslims from southern Bulgaria would be given priority in emigration so that Bulgaria's borderlands would be nationally secure.¹⁶ Christian refugees from Thrace and Macedonia nonetheless changed the demography of southern Bulgaria because it was their primary destination. Burgas province absorbed the most refugees, roughly one-third of the estimated 250,000, though Plovdiv, Kŭrdzhali, Haskovo, Yambol, as well as Petrich in the southwest were very important destinations as well.¹⁷ Refugees preferred southern Bulgaria both because they were used to the climate and

¹⁴ Peeva, "Ankarskite Spogodbi," 135–36. Meanwhile, Bulgaria's foreign minister Kalfov and Greece's foreign minister Politis had already signed in September 1924 in Geneva a convention according to which a joint commission would ensure the protection of the Greek national minority in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian national minority in Greece. At the same time, however, Kalfov and Politis agreed that voluntary emigration would not be inhibited. The convention provoked heated debates in the Bulgarian and Greek parliaments, leading to the fall of the Greek government and no ratification. Only in 1927 did Bulgaria's and Greece's finance ministers settle outstanding financial issues about refugee compensation. See Trifonov, *Bŭlgarskoto Natsionalno-Osvoboditelno*, 131–34, 140–41.

¹⁵ On the socioeconomic aspects of the Turkification policies of early republican Turkey, see Ayhan Aktar, *Türk milliyetçiliği, gayrimüslimler ve ekonomik dönüşüm* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2006); Valeri Stoyanov, *Turskoto Naselenia v Bŭlgariia mezhdŭ Poliusite na Etnicheskata Politika* (Sofia: LIK, 1998), 236.

¹⁶ Peeva, "Ankarskite Spogodbi," 136–37.

¹⁷ Todor Kosatev, "Nastaniavane na Bezhantsite v Burgaski Okrŭg (1919–1931 g.)," *Istoricheski Pregled* 31, no. 2 (1975): 57–69; Shivachev, "Bezhanskiit Vŭpros v Plovdivski Okrŭg"; Theodora Dragostinova, "Competing Priorities, Ambiguous Loyalties: Challenges of Socioeconomic Adaptation and National Inclusion of the Interwar Bulgarian Refugees," *Nationalities Papers* 34, no. 5 (2006): 549–74; Trifonov, *Bŭlgarskoto Natsionalno-osvoboditelno*, 142.

TABLE 1: POPULATION CLASSIFICATION AND DISTRIBUTION¹⁸

	Religion			Language		Nationality		
Year		Eastern Orthodox	Islam	Bulgarian	Turkish	Bulgarian	Turkish	Pomak
1887	Absolute Number	2,424,371	876,215	2,395,250	607,331			
	% of Total Population	76.86	21.44	73.75	19.25			
1892	Absolute Number	2,606,786	643,258	2,505,326	569,728			
	% of Total Population	78.74	19.43	75.67	17.21			
1900	Absolute Number	3,019,999	643,300	2,887,860	539,656			
	% of Total Population	80.64	17.18	77.13	14.41			
1905	Absolute Number	3,344,790	603,867	3,210,502	514,658	3,184,437	488,010	19,373
	% of Total Population	82.88	14.97	79.56	12.75	78.91	12.09	0.48
1910	Absolute Number	3,643,110	602,078	3,523,151	504,681	3,497,613	465,641	21,143
	% of Total Population	83.99	13.88	81.23	11.63	80.63	10.74	0.49
1920	Absolute Number	4,061,829	690,734	4,041,276	542,904	3,947,657	520,339	88,399
	% of Total Population	83.8	14.25	83.38	11.2	81.44	10.74	1.82
1926	Absolute Number	4,568,773	789,296	4,585,620	607,763	4,455,355	577,552	102,351
	% of Total Population	83.39	14.41	83.7	11.09	80.32	10.54	1.87
1934	Absolute Number	5,128,890	821,298	5,274,854	618,268			
	% of Total Population	84.4	13.5	86.8	10.2			

because they hoped for diplomatic revisions that would allow them to go back to their homes. As the Ankara Accords were debated in the Bulgarian National Assembly, the Internal Thracian Revolutionary Organization (ITRO) issued a special memorandum demanding from the assembly “decisive measures against 680,000 Turks who live in Bulgaria” so as to force the Turkish government to modify its position vis-à-vis the Bulgarian Christian refugees from Turkey.¹⁹ Gradually realizing the remoteness of such a possibility and feeling alienation from their supposedly natural home Bulgaria, refugees came to support the idea of “liberating” the entirety of Macedonia and Thrace and, by the 1930s, the incorporation of these regions into Bulgaria.²⁰ Displaced and impoverished, many refugees from Thrace as well as Macedonia were drawn to or forced to support irredentist, paramilitary nationalist organizations such as the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), the Internal Thracian Revolutionary Organization (ITRO), and the Committee for the Liberation of Thrace (CLT). At least until their suppression after the coup of 1934, they acted as parallel state authorities, mobilizing Bulgarian Christians, extracting “taxes” from peasants to support organizational activities or forming ad hoc alliances with district officials to suppress brigandage in exchange for being left alone.²¹

Thracian refugees consistently complained that the Bulgarian Agricultural Bank did not provide them with credit for land purchases. The jour-

¹⁸ Table 1: Population Classification and Distribution is compiled based on information from Georgi T. Danailov, *Izsledvaniia vŭrkhu Demografiata na Bŭlgariia* (Sofia: Pechatnitsa P. Glushkov, 1931), and the official statistical reports (*Statisticheski Godishnik na Tsarstvo Bŭlgariia*) published annually since 1909 (except during the Balkan Wars and First World War) in the Kingdom of Bulgaria. Some reports contain cumulative data (often corrected) for a few years prior to the publication date. The years at the top the table are those in which a census was completed. The categories used to classify the population were not consistent as can be seen from the gaps in the table. After 1934 only the population of the capital Sofia was classified according to nationality while the categories of religion and language were removed.

¹⁹ Quoted in Trifonov, *Bŭlgarskoto Natsionalno-Osvoboditelno*, 140.

²⁰ Theodora Dragostinova, “Competing Priorities, Ambiguous Loyalties”; Trifonov, *Bŭlgarskoto Natsionalno-osvoboditelno*, 135, 156–57, 167–70. In 1930 the organization of Thracian youth called for a commemorative protest against the Treaty of Neuilly, see Dŭrzhaven Arkhiv (DA)-Kŭrdzhali, f. 59k, op. 1, a. e. 5, l. 363.

²¹ On the coercive and violent methods of these organizations as well as their impact on domestic politics, see Trifonov, *Bŭlgarskoto Natsionalno-osvoboditelno*, and Frusetta, “Bulgaria’s Macedonia.”

nal of the Thracian refugees *Rhodopa* lamented their pitiful condition and accused Bulgarian governments as well as provincial and local authorities of obstruction and neglect. Quite likely to placate refugee discontent, local authorities in the newly acquired southeastern Kŭrdzhali region allowed families settled on state lands to become legal owners of the lots they farmed.²² Also, refugees who went to the Plovdiv province at the beginning of the 1920s quickly found work in the budding tobacco factories.²³ Overall, however, the postwar economic distress made refugee integration difficult.

In 1926 the League of Nations provided a Refugee Loan to Bulgaria specifically for the purpose of absorbing refugees. Unfortunately, once loan funds began arriving at the Bulgarian National Bank in 1927 and 1928, most were quickly directed to the payment of older debts as well as to the postwar reparation obligations.²⁴ Nonetheless, between 1927 and 1932 special commissions were established in southeastern Bulgaria to provide arable land, working animals, tools and other implements to the refugees. These commissions built on couple of earlier governmental efforts to regulate refugee integration. First, in 1924 the General Directorate of Farms Owned by Cultivators (*Trudovo Zemedelski Stopanstva*) was charged with settling refugees.²⁵ And second, in 1926 the Law for the Settlement of Refugees mandated the establishment of a General Directorate for Refugee Settlement (GDRS).²⁶ Subsequently, regional committees were also established to handle specific complaints, which gave local authorities considerable power and plenty of opportunities for corruption.²⁷ The GDRS drew up a plan to distribute arable land among the refugees from the state land fund so that small but sustainable agricultural holdings would be available per refugee family.²⁸

²² Ivanka Angelova, "Nastaniavane na Bŭlgarite ot Trakiia v Iztochnite Rodopi i Otraziavane na Tozi Protse na Stranitsite na Spisanie 'Rodopa' (1912–1941)," in *Nauchna Konferentsiia Posvetena na 60 Godini Sŭiuz na Uchenite v Bŭlgariia i 20 Godini Klon Kŭrdzhali: Nauchni Trudove* (Kŭrdzhali: n.p., 2004), 58–59.

²³ Stefan Shivachev, "Bezhanskiiat Vŭpros v Plovdivski Okrŭg," *Izvestiia na Muzeite ot Iuzhna Bŭlgariia* 13 (1987): 183–201, here 189–190.

²⁴ Roumen Avramov, *Komunalniiat Kapitalizŭm*, vol. 1, 270.

²⁵ "Labor property" as translated by Bell, *Peasants in Power*, 162–63.

²⁶ Kosatev, "Nastaniavane na Bezhantsite," 60.

²⁷ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 602; Trifonov, *Bŭlgarskoto Natsionalno-osvoboditelno*, 161; Dragostinova, "Competing Priorities, Ambiguous Loyalties," 565.

²⁸ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 603–4.

This state land fund, made up of abandoned, unclaimed, confiscated properties especially of Turkish Muslim refugees and emigrants, had developed since Bulgaria's foundation. Due to the land policies of BANU's government, which aimed to inappropriate landless cultivators as well as to increase the arable plots of smallholders, the state land fund grew. BANU tied its reforms in land tenure, specifically the idea of labor property, to refugee settlement, partly to absorb the massive influx of people as well as probably to legitimize land redistribution.²⁹ Thus, land reform and refugee settlement became inextricably connected. The administrative structures that distributed land to refugees, known as the Land Reallocation Commissions (LRCs), were in fact conceived during BANU's tenure under the Law for Labor Property (1921).³⁰ Even though it was repealed after the 1923 coup, the LRCs were retained to manage the fund for labor property, known as Farms Owned by Cultivators (FOC). Parcels from the FOC could be given to Bulgarian Christian refugees while expanding the FOC fund entailed surveying and appropriating Christian as well as Muslim landed properties.³¹ Consequently, because the upkeep and expansion of the FOC became tied to refugee settlement, ethno-religious conflicts shaped postwar recovery.

Ethno-religious tensions ran high especially in newly acquired territories like Kŭrdzhali (the "new lands" as they were called) partly because it was especially there that the land reallocation commissions looked for and took over landed properties that lacked an owner or had been usurped (like municipal pastures).³² For example, refugees wanted to lease arable plots but refused to sign contracts that obliged them to pay rent as happened in the Muslim village of Fashaklar (Kŭrdzhali district).³³ In another case, the municipal council of the Muslim village of Çitaklar Atik wrote to the Kŭrdzhali district judge to request that the LRC reevaluate the findings of the agronomist Mr. Abadzhiev. He had characterized the nearby wood groves as poor quality and, as such, suitable for being turned into a new settlement. Peasants from different villages in the municipality, the council argued, had both Ottoman and Bulgarian ownership documents for wood grove parcels and relied on them for their supply of fire wood. In

²⁹ Bell, *Peasants in Power*, 166–67.

³⁰ See "Zakon za trudovata pozemlena sobstvenost," in Iochev, *Zakonodatelstvoto*, 429–30 (articles 17–34).

³¹ DA-Kŭrdzhali, f. 130k, op. 1, a. e. 3, l. 192, 199, 267, 282.

³² Ibid., l. 188–90, 196, 318–21, 358.

³³ Ibid., l. 355.

addition, the villagers owned arable land in a locality called “Yeni Tarla” which a neighboring village in the Haskovo district had practically usurped after the First Balkan War (1912).³⁴

After refusing in June 1925 to hand in private property for refugee needs, in February 1926 the Çitaklar Atik municipal council acceded to the settlement of Bulgarian Christians but requested that this happen in “Yeni Tarla,” which had apparently been contested among four villages for decades.³⁵ Resistance probably would have backfired, legally at least; in 1923 the National Assembly had already approved a law for the settlement of refugees.³⁶ Not less important was the role of the Internal Thracian Revolutionary Organization. In Kürdzhali, for instance, ITRO helped the local authorities quell conflicts between the arriving Christian refugees and Turkish Muslim residents and ultimately forced Turkish Muslim village mayors to settle refugees.³⁷ Sometimes separate refugee neighborhoods were established within Turkish Muslim villages in the Kürdzhali district. Occasionally refugees received the houses of Turkish Muslim emigrants, but fund land was not always available or of poor quality, at least for grain cultivation.³⁸

To remedy the situation, soon after the promulgation of the Law for Refugee Settlement (1926) municipal councils in the “new lands” convened to describe, list, and allocate vacant or abandoned lands suitable for the FOC fund. Simultaneously the central council for the FOC at the Ministry of Agriculture met and appropriated lands in the Kürdzhali area both for refugees and for peasants in need of arable plots.³⁹ During 1929 and 1930 district LRCs were instructed and reminded by the Ministry of Agriculture and State Properties to find lands for the FOC.⁴⁰ In March 1930 the Department of State Properties at the Ministry of Agriculture asked provincial governors to provide information about the number of Turkish Muslim emigrants, the status of their properties, and requested, when possible, to include them in the state land fund.⁴¹ Ivan Nikolov, the

³⁴ Ibid., I. 279–80.

³⁵ Ibid., I. 284, 286.

³⁶ Angelova, “Nastaniavane na Bŭlgarite ot Trakiia,” 58.

³⁷ Trifonov, *Bŭlgarskoto Natsionalno-osvoboditelno*, 161.

³⁸ DA-Kŭrdzhali, f. 130k, op. 1, a. e. 3, I. 292, 302.

³⁹ DA-Kŭrdzhali, f. 130k, op. 1, a. e. 8, I. 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 19, 23, 48, 56, 121, 145.

⁴⁰ DA-Kŭrdzhali, f. 130k, op. 1, a. e. 9, I. 8.

⁴¹ Angelova, “Nastaniavane na Bŭlgarite ot Trakiia,” 60.

LRC delegate to the town of Mastanli (present-day Momchilgrad) in the “new lands” (and nearby Kürdzhalı), sent to the Mastanli municipality a list of forty-nine Muslim landed properties due for appropriation for the FOC. Accordingly, the municipal council that consisted of Turkish Muslims met to discuss the list. The council drastically modified the list, and except in a couple of instances, its decisions seem to have been accepted. It reduced the amount of land to be appropriated by presenting a couple of arguments. First, the council refused to give up land that had not been legally divided among family members or heirs. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it underscored land ownership as a question of kin: people on the list (usually men) who had immigrated by 1918 to Komotini (Greek Thrace) or the Ottoman Empire had left behind family members (often sisters) or relatives who still cultivated the land; so only the plot that would have been farmed by the emigrant should be taken. Perhaps by stressing regional-kin ties, the council hoped to limit Bulgarian Christian settlement. The Ministry of Agriculture was not happy with the outcome. The Department of State Properties and Settlement at the Ministry of Agriculture criticized the Kürdzhalı authorities for not being vigilant enough in including lands in the FOC.⁴² Sporadic settlement of refugees there continued throughout the 1930s.⁴³

The creation of the FOC land fund had an impact on the Muslim endowments (*vakıfs*) as well as on the authority of the Office of the Chief Müftü, which supervised all remaining *vakıfs* in Bulgaria. In May 1926, a circular of the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs (MFCA) ordered all *vakıfs* in Vidin, Stara Zagora, and Aitos which were administered by trustees (*mütevellıs*) to be transferred to the administration of the Muslim Confessional Organizations (MCOs).⁴⁴ This circular, as we will see below, stemmed from a broader postwar effort to entwine *vakıf* management with minority rights and obligations.

Making *vakıfs* communal Muslim property under state supervision had already been underway (as we saw in the previous chapters) but was abetted by the wars when *mütevellıs* escaped from Bulgaria, thus enabling the authorities to claim *vakıf* properties as vacant. Soon after WWI, the Statute for the Religious Organization and Rule of Muslims in the Bulgar-

⁴² DA-Kürdzhalı, f. 130k, op. 1, a. e. 9, l. 4–7, 9.

⁴³ Georgi V. Dimitrov, *Nastniavane i Ozemliavane na Bŭlgarskite Bezantsi, 1919–1939* (Blagoevgrad: n.p., 1985), 217.

⁴⁴ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 121, l. 25.

ian Kingdom (26 June 1919; henceforth the Statute)⁴⁵ expanded the provisions on *vakıfs* of the Temporary Regulations for the Religious Rule of Muslims (1895; henceforth Temporary Regulations) by expressly ordering the transfer of *vakıfs* from trustees to the management of MCOs.⁴⁶ These were new administrative units even though their structure in many respects elaborated and systematized practices of *vakıf* and school boards already outlined in 1895. MCOs in fact centralized the overseeing of all social, religious, financial, and cultural activities connected to Muslim life in the Bulgarian Kingdom. In the post-World War I spirit of protecting national minorities, MCOs were supposed to provide Muslims with the framework to run their affairs as a minority while enjoying full legal equality. Every Muslim male, “regardless of the sect to which he belongs,” was obliged to be a member of the MCO of his place of residence. MCOs became thoroughly integrated in the bureaucracy: they were subordinated to the supreme Islamic religious authority in Bulgaria, the chief *müftü*, who in turn reported to the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs.

MCOs used *vakıf* revenue for organizational expenses, including annual dues to the Office of the Chief Müftü, as well as for the upkeep of mosques and schools. During the fall of 1920 a special committee was set up to lead the transfer of administration from the *mütevellıs* to the MCOs. The committee included a delegate from the MFCA, the *vakıf* department chief at the Office of the Chief Müftü, a representative from the respective MCO, and the trustee or someone from his family.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the governing body of each MCO also needed the MFCA’s approval for any financial or administrative transaction concerning the endowments.⁴⁸ Finally, the chief *müftü* was required to submit to the ministry a comprehensive list of all *vakıf* properties in Bulgaria. He did so by 1929 after collecting information from *müftüs* and MCOs.⁴⁹

In the course of subordinating trustees, *vakıfs*’ agricultural properties sparked great controversies because the Ministry of Agriculture, beginning

⁴⁵ “Ustav za dukhovnoto ustroistvo i upravlennie na miusulmanite v Tsartstvo Bŭlgariia,” in *Dŭrzhaven Vestnik* 65, 26 June 1919, 1–10.

⁴⁶ See § 168 of the statute, in “Ustav za dukhovnoto,” 9.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the decisions on three endowment properties in the district of Plovdiv, TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 121, l. 90, 91, 92, 119, 119 g.

⁴⁸ See § 173 and § 174 of the statute in “Ustav za dukhovnoto,” 9; for a specific case, see TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 121, l. 111.

⁴⁹ The defter containing this list can be found in Orientaliski Otdel—NBKM, D 720.

with BANU's tenure, tried to distribute among needy Bulgarian peasants monastery and *vakıf* lands that were not cultivated.⁵⁰ While the impact on monastery lands was very limited⁵¹ the impact on *vakıf* agricultural lands was much more pronounced. Even though the Office of the Chief Müftü allied with MCOs and the MFCA against reluctant *mütevellîs*,⁵² it persistently resisted the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture to take over *vakıf* arable lands and include them in the state land fund. That is, when it came to the resources of endowment agricultural properties, the MCOs as well as the Office of the Chief Müftü challenged official plans for expanding state agricultural properties. These contestations, as I will show below, solidified the role of MCOs and the chief *müftü* as mediators between Turkish Muslims as a minority and state institutions.

Let me illustrate how this mediating role developed with an archival case. In May 1920, Chief Müftü S. Faik protested to the MFCA that the Ministry of Agriculture wished to declare pastures, fields, and wood groves in the Plovdiv village of Klementinovo as state lands even though they were part of the *vakıf* "Ömer Pasha."⁵³ The Ministry of Agriculture and State Properties argued that the last trustee had died sometime after the Second Balkan War without leaving any heirs, hence the properties reverted to the Bulgarian state. In the following year, Chief Müftü Faik drew on the founding charter of the *vakıf* as well as on Islamic law⁵⁴ to argue that 1) lack of heirs simply meant that the trustee's funds would serve the poor and 2) a *vakıf* ultimately belonged to God, hence to be used only for pious goals. Most importantly, in case of a *mütevellî's* death and in the absence of heirs, it was the chief *müftü* who had the right to appoint another trustee. Faik pleaded with the MFCA to intercede on his behalf with the Ministry of Agriculture. Meanwhile, Hacı Celil Mehmedov, the chair of the *vakıf* department at MCO-Plovdiv, wrote to Faik

⁵⁰ Petrova, *Samostoiatelnoto Upravlenie na BZNS*, 114–16, 118–19; Daskalov, *Bûlgarskoto Obshtestvo 1878–1939 (Tom 2)*, 267–68. Sometimes conflicts between *mütevellîs* and MCOs ensued, particularly over lucrative urban properties. A case in point is the decades-long dispute over the ownership of a *hamam* from the *vakıf* "Rakas Sinan Bey," in Karnobat, TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 122, l. 2–60.

⁵¹ Daskalov, *Bûlgarskoto Obshtestvo 1878–1939 (Tom 1)*, 194; D. Petrova, *Samostoiatelnoto Upravlenie na BZNS*, 116.

⁵² TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 121, l. 118, 118 g.

⁵³ Ibid., l. 82–82 g., 85 g.; also known as the *vakıf* "Çelebi Ömer Pasha."

⁵⁴ More precisely the Hanafi legal school that predominated in the Ottoman Empire.

that the trustee was in fact alive, residing in Bursa (Turkey). Apparently the trustee's assistant delegate had falsified his signature to sell a watermill to the priest Nedelcho Atanasov. The MFCA dispatched an official to investigate the matter. Meanwhile, in spring 1921 the Agricultural Ministry presented the Plovdiv district court with the *vakıf* financial records for 1911 according to which there was revenue only from urban properties and one watermill but nothing from agricultural lands. The case dragged on until 1929 when the MFCA managed to prevail over the Ministry of Agriculture and the *vakıf* was transferred to the MCO-Plovdiv.⁵⁵ This longwinded success story was the exception rather than the rule, revealing ultimately how much the endowments, MCOs, and the Office of the Chief Müftü were at the mercy of the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the Ministry of Agriculture disputed the *vakıf* status of fields, pastures, and forests in order to appropriate them for the FCO fund at the expense of the MCOs. Usually the agricultural ministry claimed *vakıf* lands by pointing to the death or absence of a trustee, as in the case above. More consequential was the ministry's tacit perception of *vakıfs* as subordinated to higher state interests. A case in point was the conflict between the Stara Zagora *müftü* and the Department of State Properties at the Ministry of Agriculture. In a lengthy exposition to the ministry (dated February 1927), the *müftü* argued that the Statute empowered him as well as the MCOs to take over the management of any *vakıf* left without a trustee. Yet the ministry ignored the Statute and claimed, for instance, that a forest within a *vakıf* in the village of Tsar Asparukhovo (Stara Zagora district) belonged to the state since it had been classified as vacant in 1914.⁵⁶ The ministry went further in 1929 by asking *vakıfs* and school boards to prepare lists of their properties. Special questionnaires were used in Haskovo and Burgas to discover agricultural lands within *vakıfs*. In addition to accumulating land knowledge, the ministry aimed to stop (without much success) the illicit sale of endowment lands.⁵⁷ This issue became even more prescient when Turkish Muslims emigrated (to be discussed in the next section). As they departed entire MCOs ceased to exist. What was to be done with the properties of

⁵⁵ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 1, a. e. 121, l. 97, 97 g., 99, 101, 101 g., 102, 102 g., 104, 104 g., 107, 121, 124.

⁵⁶ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 13, l. 6–7.

⁵⁷ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 25, l. 13–24; a. e. 34, l. 74–77.

defunct MCOs became a contentions matter.⁵⁸ Were they state or were they Muslim communal property?

The answer to that question increasingly favored the Ministry of Agriculture, especially as the country sunk under the weight of the Great Depression. By 1931 *vakıf* properties had become subject to the legal mandatory decrease of leasing rates which was imposed on all state fund lands for the fiscal year 1929–30.⁵⁹ In 1935 the district agronomist of Nova Zagora confiscated 500 ares of *vakıf* fields used to maintain the Turkish school in the Sofular village and distributed the land among poor Bulgarian villagers.⁶⁰ Clearly MCO authority over agricultural land, and by extension minority rights, could be overridden in the service of official plans. In short, as MCOs tightened their control of *vakıfs* so did the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture expand their supervision of MCOs. Thus, MCOs became inadvertent agents or feeble opponents in the transfer of “Turkish” agricultural lands into “Bulgarian” hands. Justified with economic needs and motivated by nation-building objectives, this transfer, as we will see in the next section, confined Turkish Muslims as a national minority intended to serve rival Bulgarian and Turkish nationalisms.

THE POLITICS OF LAND OWNERSHIP AND EMIGRATION

Land transfer in the interwar period, entwined as it was with refugee settlement, economic crisis, and nation building, hinged on the voluntary or coerced emigration of Muslims. Yet central and provincial Bulgarian authorities vacillated and sometimes disagreed on whether or to what degree they wished for Turkish Muslims to leave. Both levels of administration, however, regarded as a security threat the sizeable Muslim population residing in the regions bordering Turkey and Greece. In the Kürdzhali region, for example, Muslims constituted a majority. Having recently acquired Kürdzhali, officials feared that Bulgaria would lose this territory again and even other areas in the south with dense Muslim populations. These fears stemmed in part from the Greco–Turkish population exchange and the post–World War I border adjustments that aimed to

⁵⁸ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 41, l. 1, 25.

⁵⁹ Ibid., l. 57, 58, 63, 81.

⁶⁰ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 92, l. 2.

achieve national homogeneity. Even more frightening was the dissemination among Bulgaria's Muslims of Turkish nationalist and modernization ideas (Kemalism). Turkish national mobilization among Muslims, according to officials at all levels, would lead to territorial losses. Assimilation or emigration quickly became the only "solutions."

The struggle for land in postwar southern Bulgaria was accompanied by the familiar conflicts between Bulgarian authorities and Bulgarian peasants over the landed properties of emigrating Turkish Muslims.⁶¹ In the interwar years, however, the symbolic and material worth of land in the southern Bulgarian countryside increased for a couple of reasons that coexisted uneasily. First, it was not only refugees who settled there, but also impoverished peasants from other parts of Bulgaria. While special legal and administrative measures were taken to promote resettlement, they were often tied to the actual and aspired emigration of Turkish Muslims. Second, the ministries of the Interior and War viewed the emigration of Turkish Muslims and the settlement of Bulgarian Christians as matters of national security and sovereignty. However, the labor of Muslims in southeastern Bulgaria became valuable because many areas were suitable for tobacco cultivation in which Muslims were experienced. This luxurious crop was important in providing jobs for refugees as well as in aiding postwar recovery and economic growth in the 1930s.⁶² For this reason the governor of Mastanli province, Mr. Katskov, wrote an anxious confidential letter in 1933 to the Interior Ministry in which he pleaded for help against brigandage, and significantly, against Turkish Muslim emigration. Turks, he explained, cultivated the "highly valuable [*sküpotsenen*]", superior quality tobacco. When it was sold, lower quality tobacco could be sold alongside as well, so "big national interests" were at stake, Katskov cautioned, which had to override local political squabbles as well as the efforts of local Bulgarians to play the national card.⁶³ His was a lonely voice, however. As we will see below, a consensus emerged that Turkish Muslim emigration would solve Bulgaria's economic and national problems. This consensus stimulated ethno-religious competition over land because it constituted both an economic resource and home: for Muslims through claims to nativity while for Bulgarian Christians through inclusion in the hegemonic

⁶¹ See especially chapters 4 and 5. For specific cases in the border regions, see DA-Kürdzhalı, f. 130k, op. 1, a. e. 15, l. 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10.

⁶² On the role of tobacco in postwar economic development and state building, see especially Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke*, chapters 4 and 5.

⁶³ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 7, a. e. 748, l. 6–7.

ethnicity. Put differently, Bulgarian citizenship become a terrain of competition between two national communities.

Aiming for national homogeneity, the Bulgarian authorities crafted different strategies for managing Turkish Muslims, whom they regarded as a “genuine [*istinsko*] Muslim minority,” and for Pomaks, whom they perceived as essentially “Bulgarians of pure [*chisto*] Bulgarian descent” who should be assimilated.⁶⁴ Especially the ministries of Agriculture, the Interior, and War viewed Turkish Muslim emigration as serving Bulgaria’s interests. The Ministry of Agriculture in particular hoped that the landed properties of Turkish Muslim emigrants would diminish the pressures for arable land among Bulgarian Christians.

By the end of December 1932 the agency that dealt with the settlement of refugees was dissolved while outstanding refugee issues were transferred to the Ministry of Finance.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the demand for agricultural land remained on the political agenda this time for Bulgarian Christians residing in areas afflicted by landslides, erosion, or flooding or those with plots too small for subsistence. A special Agency for Domestic Resettlement was set up to work along with the Department of State Properties and Land Consolidation (in the Ministry of Agriculture). The agency expected of the Bulgarian government to buy the landed properties of emigrating Turkish Muslims and add them to the FOC fund. In addition, following the recommendations made by the Forestry, Hunting, and Fishing Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Minister K. Boiadzhiev had already charged his subordinates in September 1934 with preparing reports to the Council of Ministers as well as to the Ministry of Finance so that Bulgarian Christian resettlement could begin.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, district authorities, agronomists especially, began collecting information about the number of rural Turkish Muslim families that had already emigrated or planned to do so as well as the size and type of their landholdings. All information was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 507, l. 7.

⁶⁵ Dimitrov, *Nastaniavane i Ozemliavane*, 204–31.

⁶⁶ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2386, l. 42, 230–33. The decision is typed out at the top of the report; it also notes that approximately 300 families from western Bulgaria (primarily along the Iskŭr River) needed to be resettled during the 1934–35 fiscal year, especially in districts in the Plovdiv province.

⁶⁷ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2386, l. 8, 9, 10–12, 165, 171, 173, 174, 176, 177, 184–85; a. e. 2427, l. 1, 13, 24, 34, 35–36, 37–39.

Toward the end of July 1935 Dako Iv. Toshev, chief of the Department of Landed Property and Consolidation, wrote a report to the minister in which he emphasized how important the properties of Turkish Muslim emigrants were to the country's economy.⁶⁸ Toshev argued that most of the unemployed people since the beginning of the global Great Depression were impoverished former smallholders. Hence the best way to deal with the economic crisis was to move peasants to areas of the country where fertile land was available, i.e., areas populated by Muslim Turks who were ready to immigrate to Turkey. Thereby in addition to "helping a lot with resolving the social problem of unemployment, which in the country is a question dependent on the most suitable and complete use of land," domestic resettlement would enable Bulgarian Christian peasants "to become creators of prosperity [*blagă*] for themselves and the nation who would quickly replace the emigrating Turks and form a mighty shield protecting the homeland."⁶⁹

Clearly officials connected Turkish Muslim emigration to economic recovery as well as national security and sovereignty, though their efforts to devise ways of "replacing" Turks with Bulgarians consistently met with frustration for a variety of reasons. For one, the Kemalist regime in early republican Turkey employed population management to serve its own state-building agenda. Eager to welcome Muslims (except Roma and Albanians) from the Balkans so that they could both revive war-ravished Anatolia and help the authorities dilute heavily populated Kurdish areas in the east, the Turkish government encouraged immigration and the assimilation of non-Turkish Muslims.⁷⁰ It intended to achieve national homogeneity by diminishing ethnic and religious minorities residing in Turkey's borderland regions in the east as well as in Thrace.⁷¹ To this end special legal measures were taken, such as the distribution of arable land to Turkish Muslims in eastern Anatolia as well as Kurdish

⁶⁸ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2386, l. 1–7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., l. 5.

⁷⁰ Erol Ülker, "Assimilation of the Muslim Communities in the First Decade of the Turkish Republic (1923–1934)," *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Complete List (2007), <https://ejts.revues.org/822>; Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 148–55.

⁷¹ See Lerna Ekmekçiğolu, "Republic of Paradox: The League of Nations Minority Protection Regime and the New Turkey's Step-Citizens," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 4 (2014): 657–79.

deportations and resettlements. The legal basis of this attempt at social engineering were the Settlement Laws of 1926 (Law 885) and 1934 (Law 2510).⁷² By the time the Settlement Law of 1934 came into effect, the Turkish government had articulated immigration criteria as well as methodical plans for settling immigrants and resettling the Kurds. Law 2510 outlined an elaborate policy for dealing with domestic challenges to the early republican regime by dividing Turkey into three settlement zones and distributing people across the country so that the demography would be shifted in favor of Turkish Muslims.⁷³ Desirable immigrants included ethnic Turks as well as Muslims “connected to Turkish culture” whose primary language may not have been Turkish (like the Pomaks, for instance) but they could be assimilated by adopting Turkish as their only language. Such immigrants were to be sent to zone 1, i.e., to areas “where the concentrating of populations of Turkish culture is desired.” Land was to be provided from the public treasury to persons of Turkish descent and language.⁷⁴

Prime areas for population homogenization thus became especially the rebellious Kurdish areas of eastern Anatolia as well as Thrace. Thrace was important for a couple of reasons: 1) non-Muslims still lived there despite the massive exodus of Christians since the Balkan Wars; 2) it shared a border with Greece and Bulgaria, the latter also being a revisionist power.⁷⁵ For Ankara the Turkification of Thrace became synonymous with national security. Concerns that expansionist Italy and revisionist Bulgaria might cooperate against Turkey in the Aegean made Turkish offi-

⁷² Kurdish revolts in 1927–30 and 1936–38 underscored the limits both of crude force alone and of Turkish authority in the east, compelling the government to supplement deportations with education and cultural transformation. Ülker, “Assimilation of the Muslim Communities”; Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 107–217.

⁷³ Erol Ülker, “Assimilation, Security and Geographical Nationalization in Interwar Turkey: The Settlement Law of 1934,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 7 (2008), <https://ejts.revues.org/2123>.

⁷⁴ Ülker, “Assimilation, Security and Geographical Nationalization,” [15]–[17], [19], [23], [25], [31].

⁷⁵ Ibid., [34]–[51]; Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Geographies of Nationalism and Violence: Rethinking Young Turk ‘Social Engineering,’” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 7 (2008), <https://ejts.revues.org/2583>, [35]–[47]; Rifat Bali, “The 1934 Thrace Events: Continuity and Change within Turkish State Policies Regarding Non-Muslim Minorities: An Interview with Rifat Bali,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 7 (2008), <https://ejts.revues.org/2903>.

cials especially sensitive to the presence of non-Muslims in Thrace, resulting in pressures on Christians and Jews to emigrate while settling immigrating Turkish Muslims.⁷⁶ This dynamic exploded with the Thrace Affair when in the summer of 1934, a couple of weeks after the promulgation of the Settlement Law, Muslim Turks attacked the properties of Turkish Jews in Edirne, Çanakkale, Uzunköprü, Kırklareli, and Babaeski. In the fall of 1936 by the terms of the Montreux Convention (to which Bulgaria was a signatory) Turkey successfully renegotiated the clauses of the Lausanne Treaty which had mandated the demilitarization of the Straits. Bulgarian Christians from Edirne and its environs were also forced to leave over the next years.⁷⁷

In some cases, as was in the village of Kurfali, properties were to be exchanged between the arriving Turkish Muslims and the departing fifty-two Bulgarian Christian families. These transactions did not go smoothly. Wealthier Bulgarian landowners apparently cheated poorer ones as they bought land in Bulgaria while Turks were not issued ownership documents, prompting some families to look for home elsewhere.⁷⁸ In July 1938 the Thessaloniki Accord (signed by Turkey as well) allowed Greece to remilitarize Thrace and Bulgaria to disregard the Neuilly Treaty clauses that limited the country's arms holdings (which Bulgaria had been building up anyhow).⁷⁹ The gradual dissolution of the post-World War I order of which the remilitarization of Thrace since 1936 was just one example explains the nervousness of the Kemalist regime about Thrace. As Bulgarian officials from the Interior Ministry realized, Turkey accepted emigrants from the Shumen province in the northeast more readily than those from the border regions of southern Bulgaria, and especially in the region of the eastern Rhodope Mountains (i.e., eastern Thrace).⁸⁰ By fall 1938, the Bulgarian Ministry of War feared that Turkey might force the question of plebiscite in the eastern Rhodope region "and in so doing to close perma-

⁷⁶ See Rifat Bali, *Cumhuriyet yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: bir Türkleştirme serüveni (1923–1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000).

⁷⁷ Ülker, "Assimilation, Security and Geographical Nationalization," [35]–[46]; Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri*, 246–47.

⁷⁸ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 917, l. 44–46. The events unfolded during 1937 and 1938.

⁷⁹ R. J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 168–69.

⁸⁰ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 917, l. 1; a. e. 423, l. 49; op. 1, a. e. 1173, l. 71.

nently the road of the Bulgarian people to the Aegean Sea.”⁸¹ This fear must have stemmed from a couple of contemporary territorial adjustments on the grounds of language and ethnicity. First, in late 1937, thanks to well organized national mobilization as well as skilful diplomacy Turkey succeeded in obtaining independence for the Sanjak of Alexandretta from the French mandate over Syria.⁸² Second, the Sudeten Crisis was “resolved” in fall 1938 with Czechoslovakia’s territorial loss to Germany. Put differently, Bulgarian governments feared that Turkey’s immigration policies would prevent Bulgaria from claiming that, due to its ethnic composition, Thrace belonged to Bulgaria.⁸³

Hence Turkish Muslim emigration from interwar Bulgaria was embedded in the Turkish as well as Bulgarian nation-building projects. While the Ankara Accords (1925) allowed for uninhibited voluntary emigration of Muslim Turks from Bulgaria and of Christian Bulgarians from Turkey, since 1934 the Turkish government began setting annual immigration quotas for Bulgaria. The Turkish Legation in Sofia communicated the quotas to the Bulgarian ministries of the Interior and Foreign and Confessional Affairs. Those Turkish Muslims who were capable of paying for the entire emigration process by themselves were not included in the quotas. Also, the annual quotas were valid only for specifically designated districts in Bulgaria and not for the entire country.⁸⁴ Bulgaria’s War Ministry had gathered information on Law 2510 by 1937, which it conveyed in a confidential report to the Political Section of the MFCA, to the general secretary of the Ministry of the Interior and Public Health, and to the Ministry of Agriculture. The War Ministry’s informant who prepared the report was thoroughly impressed by the scope of Turkey’s resettlement and deportation policies, attributing to them the Kemalist regime’s success in overpowering the Kurds as well as Turkey’s industrialization and its agricultural development. “The Turks, and every Turk individually, are proud of the advances in the Turkish economy during the last fifteen years, and perhaps with good reason,”⁸⁵ concluded the report.

⁸¹ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 917, l. 1.

⁸² See Sarah D. Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁸³ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 427, l. 7.

⁸⁴ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 33, 60; f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 424, l. 24–26.

⁸⁵ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2392, l. 24–35.

Turkey's efforts to control emigration from Bulgaria predictably disturbed the Bulgarian governments because they also relied on Turkish Muslim emigration to resolve their own national security fears and economic problems. From the perspective of the ministries of Agriculture and the Interior, encouraging Turkish Muslim emigration had the benefit of freeing up arable land for needy Bulgarian Christians and of populating the border zones with nationally loyal citizens. In fact, the Interior Ministry asked the Foreign Ministry to negotiate with Ankara to raise the annual immigration quota or even to conclude a new diplomatic agreement on emigration.⁸⁶ Turkish Muslim emigration from the Shumen province in the northeast was considered useful economically and valuable for "diluting" that population. Mr. Toshev, chief of the Department of Landed Property and Consolidation, dispatched an inspector to several districts (Popovo, Türgovishte, Novi Pazar, Provadiia, and Omortag) in the northeast province of Shumen which were populated by Turkish Muslims. In June 1936, the inspector reported to Toshev, who in turn submitted the findings to the Agricultural Ministry. The inspector described the lands that would be suitable for settling Bulgarians from three villages in Sofia and Kiustendil districts; the lands would be potentially available since "the Turkish population still has a strong desire to emigrate."⁸⁷ Indeed, according to the data collected by agronomists, between 1932 and 1934, most emigrants (1,043 families) were from the Shumen province. At the beginning of 1935, an additional 1,800 families from there were preparing to relocate to Turkey, hoping to obtain Turkish visas first and then proceed with selling their land.⁸⁸ According to the Interior Ministry, 73,000 Turkish Muslims had emigrated from the entire country between 1934 and 1938 (see Table 2) while the Shumen province still had 215,000 and the southern province of Stara Zagora 129,000, the total Turkish Muslim population being approximately 600,000.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 53–54.

⁸⁷ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2428, l. 47–48.

⁸⁸ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2386, l. 3.

⁸⁹ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 53.

TABLE 2: INTERWAR EMIGRATION
FROM BULGARIA TO TURKEY⁹⁰

Year	Number of Emigrants
1923–33	101,253
1927–30	16,873
1931	2,141
1932	1,252
1933	1,382
1934	6,128
1935	22,762
1936	14,207
1937	14,598
1938	15,727
1939	15,543

The Interior Ministry valued the emigration of Turkish Muslims from the borderlands of the south and southeast much more than that from other parts of the country. Partly this had to do with the greater historical fluidity of Bulgaria's southern borders. For example, the predominantly Muslim Kŭrdzhali and other parts of the eastern Rhodope Mountains (both in Stara Zagora province) were acquired after the wars, that is, they were "new lands." In this particular case there was also a sense of restoring territory to the "rightful" owners: these "new lands" had been ceded to the Ottomans when the Principality of Bulgaria took over Eastern Rumelia. Nonetheless, the "new lands" had to be integrated in the "old lands" of Bulgaria just like the Bulgarian Christian refugees had to be assimilated in their new "natural" homeland. The urgency of national integration in the southeast was also compounded by the violent insurgency seeking the incorporation of Thrace in Bulgaria as well as the expulsion of Turkish Muslim, Pomak, and some Greek residents of the region.

In October 1937 the district chief of Momchilgrad, V. Hubenov, wrote to the provincial governor of Stara Zagora urging the settlement of Bulgarians in the eastern Rhodope region. Hubenov indicated that the Interior Minister had requested in August information about the popula-

⁹⁰ Table 2 was compiled with information from *Statisticheski Godishnik na Tsarstvo Bŭgariia* (1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940) and Valery Stoyanov, *Turskoto Naselenie v Bŭlgarŭia mezhdŭ Poliusite na Etnicheskata Politika* (Sofia: LIK, 1997), 237–39.

tion there. Hubenov provided population tables district by district, concluding with alarm that Turks (141,582) constituted a majority whereas Bulgarians (33,224) were outnumbered even by the Pomaks (35,525).⁹¹ He censured the postwar governments for lacking a policy on how to settle Bulgarians in the valleys of the Rhodope Mountains and attributed this failure to the evils of political partisanship. Specifically, Hubenov argued that instead of promoting the emigration of Turks, village mayors colluded with the Turks who opposed the settlement of Bulgarians. It is probably no coincidence that in the following year Bulgarian mayors replaced Turkish mayors in three villages in the Momchilgrad district.⁹² Hubenov emphasized that unless the demography changed, Turkey would take over that region. He then proposed a scheme to compel Turkish Muslims to emigrate, which combined stigmatizing the Turks with the commitment of the government to distribute agricultural land among needy Bulgarians. Taxes should not be collected from Turkish villages for two to three years, Hubenov suggested, meanwhile, the Bulgarian Agricultural Cooperative Bank (BACB) should extend generous loans and then within two to three years the state should demand loan repayments. "Considering the character of the Turk, that is, when he has money, he spends it and doesn't save, the result will be that the lands of the Turks will be transferred either to the state or to the bank." They could then break the land up into plots of 40–50 ares and give them to Bulgarians on long-term leasing arrangements. Leading to a "calm and confident population and stable Bulgarian authority," this scheme, Hubenov pointed out, would ultimately serve Bulgaria's territorial claims since "whoever rules the Rhodope, sooner or later, he is the permanent ruler of the Aegean Sea."⁹³

Hubenov's approach, which he claimed to have developed already in 1934, seems to have inspired population-management strategies in Sofia as well. Sometime in 1938 Hristo Vasilev, vice-chair of the Public Welfare Department at the Interior Ministry, wrote a seventeen page report to the minister, titled "Plan No. 1 for Resolving the Minority Problem with Respect to the Turkish Population in Stara Zagora Province."⁹⁴ Vasilev was seriously concerned about the natural increase of the Muslim population altogether and emphasized that the south and southeast had densely populated Muslim areas that were too close to Turkey, hence in danger of

⁹¹ DA-Stara Zagora, f. 37k, op. 2, a. e. 31, l. 34–38 g.

⁹² DA-Kürdzhalı, f. 15k, op. 1, a. e. 11, l. 59.

⁹³ DA-Stara Zagora, f. 37k, op. 2, a. e. 31, l. 37–38 g.

⁹⁴ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 56–73.

being influenced by Turkish propaganda. He considered two options for Bulgaria's "minority problem." One involved resettling Turks throughout the country so as to break up cultural and regional ties in ways reminiscent of the Turkish policies toward the Kurds.⁹⁵ The other entailed encouraging Turkish Muslim, though not Pomak, emigration and the settlement of more Bulgarian Christians in the southeast.

Vasilev considered the option of resettling Turks from the south among Bulgarians in the north unfeasible for a few reasons. First, there was not enough arable land in the interior upon which Turkish families could be settled. Second, the whole process would be too expensive not least because new bureaucratic agencies with new personnel would have to be created. Vasilev projected that the cost per family would run between 10,000 to 15,000 *levs* for a total sum of 45 to 67 million *levs* just for the first year. Third, he pointed out, instead of spending so much money on the Turks who might emigrate anyhow and who in any case "will always remain foreign to the Bulgarian society and our idea of the state,"⁹⁶ the government should invest its resources in the Bulgarians. Lastly, the Turks themselves would complain and as soon as the Turkish government became aware it would protest and accuse Bulgaria of breaching its international commitment to protect the country's minorities.

Consequently, according to Vasilev, the demographic change in the south had to be accomplished by intensifying the migration of Bulgarians from the interior of the country, especially from poor and infertile areas. Thus, there would be "strong Bulgarian elements with proven patriotism and confident in their national identity."⁹⁷ He knew that Bulgarian resettlement was already underway due to land pressures. It was a legally sanctioned process thanks to the "Decree for the Domestic Resettlement of Residents from Flooded, Low-Fertility, and Overpopulated Areas in the Country" (1936). Careful to dress his suggestions in the letter of the law, Vasilev pointed out that this decree could in fact be interpreted in ways to enable the domestic resettlement of Turks, but, as mentioned already, did not consider the effort worthwhile. Rather, efficient application of the decree and greater state involvement so that "Turkish" lands were transferred to "Bulgarian" hands would yield, according to him, political as well as economic benefits.

⁹⁵ Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, passim.

⁹⁶ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 69.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, l. 68.

The major problem in Vasilev's opinion, as Ministry of Agriculture officials had already stated, was that emigrating Turkish Muslims preferred to sell their arable plots and all other properties to real estate firms and merchants rather than to Bulgarian Christian families, which generally did not have enough cash on hand to buy so much property. In sale transactions involving firms the emigrants tended to sell cheap while the land was then resold at much higher prices thus burdening Bulgarian peasants with debt. According to Toshev, the chief of the Department of Landed Property and Consolidation, the free market sale of land inhibited the wisest use of emigrants' lands as well as the development of "strong national policy and economic rationalism."⁹⁸ Turkish Muslims who planned to emigrate wished to sell everything at once because they expected the buyer also to cover all expenses associated with the emigration, such as paying debts, outstanding taxes, passport and visa fees as well as the cost of exemption from military and public labor service. This was understandable considering the widespread indebtedness of the rural population. In 1935 alone the 1,800 Turkish families that were slotted for departure to Turkey owed approximately 8 million *levs* in debt in the form of taxes as well as loans from banks, associations, and individual lenders.⁹⁹ Turkey was clearly an appealing destination for those crushed by debt.

Emigrants from Bulgarian Thrace may have also been attracted to the provision of the 1934 Settlement Law that offered Turkish Thrace as a destination. Some attempted illegal immigration, especially during the spring and summer months when seasonal work was available in Turkey. In one case during the summer of 1936 two small boats with seventeen Turkish Muslims sailed from the Bulgarian Black Sea port city of Burgas to Turkey. Within twenty-four hours they reached Turkish soil, applied for permission to stay, which was granted to them after twentysome days during which they were in legal limbo in Turkish Yeşilköy. The migrants explained that they could no longer make ends meet with fishing in Burgas, had no money for passports, and decided that their only option was to go to their "motherland/fatherland" Turkey where they also had relatives.¹⁰⁰ Letters from relatives who had successfully settled in Turkey quite likely motivated Turkish peasants in Bulgaria to seek a better life across the border. Some of the letters were seized by the Bulgarian author-

⁹⁸ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2386, l. 4, 25, 27.

⁹⁹ Ibid., l. 3, 13, 174.

¹⁰⁰ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 423, l. 83.

ities, some were translated into Bulgarian, and then filed with the police.¹⁰¹ For example, a man named Ahmed wrote (the letter is not dated) to his uncle Mustafa and in-law Hoca Efendi that the Turkish authorities distributed arable plots, vineyards, orchards, vegetable gardens, etc., throughout Thrace. Poor farmers received work animals and implements. Immigrants were also given tax and customs exemptions.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, illegal migration gave rise to people who profited from aiding the migrants to cross the border, thereby also subverting Bulgaria's and Turkey's efforts at border control.¹⁰³ An undated letter by someone who was a resident of a village or town near the city of Yambol (south-eastern Bulgaria) related the trials of illegal emigration.¹⁰⁴ The letter was written to a woman named Fatma by a man who was likely her fiancé but could not sway Fatma's father to let her make the illegal trip to Turkey. The man was helped by recent Turkish emigrants from Bulgaria who used their connections to persuade the Edirne authorities to permit him to remain legally. He settled in Edirne and, because of his experience in the tobacco industry in Bulgaria, quickly found a job in a tobacco storage facility where he was paid well. He described to Fatma the network of illegal emigration that existed from Yambol through the border with Turkey. He instructed her to travel with another family that was preparing to leave, whom to contact and how to pay, what to take for the journey, and that he would wait for her. Whether Fatma followed him is not clear, but his letter is indicative of the existence of a successful channel of illegal emigration.

As one might expect, when illegal emigration went wrong some Bulgarian officials advocated emigration quota increases. In the spring and summer of 1935 sixty illegal immigrants from Momchilgrad and Kŭrdzhali spent couple of months in a camp around Edirne waiting in vain to be allowed to settle in Turkey. One of them, judging by the name likely a Greek-speaking Bulgarian citizen, apparently not only had debts to the Agricultural Bank as well as private lenders but apparently was also charged with espionage, so he could not have obtained a passport anyway. The Turkish border officials returned all migrants to Bulgaria where the border officials refused to accept them, instead sending them to Greece where they were imprisoned for two days, and subsequently handed over

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, l. 5, 33; op. 6, a. e. 427, l. 12–15; op. 1, a. e. 639, l. 261–71.

¹⁰² TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 427, 12–13.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, l. 49; TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 507, l. 15.

¹⁰⁴ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 427, l. 14–15.

to Bulgaria.¹⁰⁵ By the beginning of 1939, Mr. Dimitrov, the police chief of Stara Zagora province, wrote to the State Security Section of the Police Department (at the Interior Ministry) in Sofia calling for larger emigration quotas. He was concerned that the Turkish border officials strenuously pursued and returned illegal emigrants from the eastern Rhodope region and, according to him, telling them to stay put because Turkey will retake these areas. The Interior Ministry also wished that the Turkish Muslims from the Rhodope region would emigrate because they “infringed upon the interests of the country.”¹⁰⁶

Turkish Muslims in the south were thus marked as a threat to national security. Since neither forced emigration nor internal deportations were feasible, the Bulgarian government focused on settling impoverished Bulgarian Christians instead. It intervened in the purchase and distribution of emigrants' lands to the extent of attempting to regulate all private sales. This approach was driven in part by widespread rural poverty. Bulgarian Christian peasants during the interwar period could hardly afford to buy the land of Turkish Muslims as they had done (albeit by accumulating debt) after the Russo-Ottoman War, in Eastern Rumelia, and after its merger with the Principality of Bulgaria. Those who lived in areas devastated by floods, slides, and erosion depended on the Ministry of Agriculture to procure for them land plots that were fertile enough at least for subsistence agriculture. Partly, though, state control of land circulation fit with the authoritarian political culture that flourished in the interwar period and especially after the 1934 coup.¹⁰⁷ In an effort to bypass land resellers, the government issued a special decree in November 1935 (modified in September 1936). It authorized the BACB and all associations that received credit from it to purchase, by mutual consent, the lands and buildings of Turkish Muslim emigrants.¹⁰⁸ In this way the bank's loans would be secured. More importantly, the emigrants' properties bought by

¹⁰⁵ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 423, l. 49.

¹⁰⁶ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 1, a. e. 1173, l. 40–41, 43.

¹⁰⁷ See Nikolai Poppetrov, “Avtoritarizŭm—fashizŭm (kŭm modela na politicheskoto razvitie na Bŭlgariia—1918–1944 g.),” *Istoricheski Pregled* 53, no. 2 (1997): 25–48. See also Roumen Avramov's *Stopanskiiat XX Vek na Bŭlgariia* where he argues that the state shaped the economy since Bulgaria's foundation thereby gradually fostering a political culture based on kin and group interests.

¹⁰⁸ The two decrees were published in the official newspaper *Dŭrzhaven Vestnik*, vol. 57, no. 266 (26 November 1935), and vol. 58, no. 206 (12 September 1936). Here I am working with the copies of the two decrees filed in the TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 74–75.

the bank would be used to inappropriate landless or near-landless peasants from overpopulated or poor areas. The 1936 decree forbade anyone to buy from emigrants more than 100 ares per nuclear family and more than 50 ares per individual. In addition, a special commission had first to permit the agricultural credit-cooperatives to buy land and then determine the size for purchase.¹⁰⁹ Turkish Muslim land and Bulgarian Christian labor were inextricably linked in the spirit of these decrees, promoting both economic development and national homogeneity.

Implementing the 1935–36 decrees proved rather difficult. Mr. Toshev, chief of the Department of Landed Property and Consolidation, reported to the minister of agriculture in 1937 that “the correct land distribution” was hindered by persistent land speculation due to 1) the emigrants’ wish to sell everything to a buyer who would cover all emigration expenses, and 2) because merchants resold plots to Bulgarian peasants by offering them credit. Toshev insisted that all emigration procedures had to be simplified. He also insisted that the BACB had to buy land in bulk from Turkish emigrants and then offer it to Bulgarian peasants at advantageous financial arrangements. In October 1938 Minister of Agriculture B. Batkov concluded that while the decrees had curbed speculation, their goal of transferring the landed properties of Turkish emigrants directly to Bulgarian peasants was not achieved, hence a new law was needed.¹¹⁰

That Bulgarian peasants also regarded the land of emigrants as a solution to economic problems is evident from the 1938 petition by the villagers of Gorno Uino (Kiustendil district, southwest). They were slotted for resettlement in a village either in the Plovdiv or the Ruse district. Instead, they asked the Ministry of Agriculture to buy the land of the Turkish Muslims who were emigrating from Gorno Uino and then distribute it.¹¹¹ In 1939 the farmers’ association from the village of Izvornik (Provadia district, northeast) petitioned the Ministry of Agriculture to help them purchase the land of Turkish Muslims emigrating from the village because merchants from other parts of the country purchased and resold plots at high price. The villagers wanted the BACB to buy the land and then sell it to Izvornik residents for an affordable price.¹¹²

But speculation was not the only concern. The Kŭrdzhali district agronomist reported in 1938 that Turkish Muslims tended to hide the

¹⁰⁹ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 74, 75.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., l. 29, 51 g., 52.

¹¹¹ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2392, l. 51–51a.

¹¹² TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 143–43 g.

land of those who had skipped the border illegally. Moreover, legal emigrants sold their lands to Turkish Muslims who stayed behind so that Bulgarian Christians would not replace the emigrants. The agronomist urged vigilance in finding all these hidden lands that were suitable for settling Bulgarians.¹¹³ Despite these challenges of nationalizing the borderlands, in December 1938 the minister of the interior rejected the offer of a private company based in Sofia to facilitate Turkish emigration and Bulgarian settlement by arranging land exchanges whereby in return for selling their land, Turks would be provided with land in Turkey. According to the minister it was not right for state authority to be delegated to a private company for a national issue of such magnitude.¹¹⁴ In other words, economic policy, security, and minority governance were inextricably linked.

Finally, the Department of Landed Property and Consolidation began drafting a law specifically for the purpose of buying the lands of emigrants.¹¹⁵ A fairly simple logic underlay the law: increase the availability of land but limit the demand and hence reduce the price. Only the BACB would be allowed to purchase the land of emigrants while they would be compelled to sell all immovable property before leaving the country. Thus, the authorities would distribute land and settle people as befitting the economic, political, and national needs of the country. Dr. St. Kashev, chief of the Economic Credit Department at BACB, also wrote a lengthy report justifying the need for BACB to become the sole buyer of emigrants' landed properties, citing the example of Romania where the national bank was purchasing the lands of emigrants. Kashev also reminded BACB's director that after the Russo-Ottoman War the National Bank in the Principality of Bulgaria had bought the lands of Muslim refugees. But legal advice from the Passport Bureau cautioned that such a law would elicit protest from Turkey and, in any case, it violated the Ankara Accords that allowed emigrants to sell their immovable properties freely. Instead the bureau pressed for simplifying the emigration procedures. True enough, soon after a draft of the law was prepared at the very end of 1939, the Turkish Legation at Sofia protested that limitations on sale transactions harmed the Turkish emigrants.¹¹⁶

In the absence of a special law, the Department of Labor Property and Land Consolidation at the Ministry of Agriculture and BCAB set up

¹¹³ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2392, l. 11.

¹¹⁴ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 917, l. 70–71 g.

¹¹⁵ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2429, l. 37–38.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 40–45, 139; TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2435, l. 1–11.

informal arrangements with emigrants. For example, in summer 1938 a lawyer and an inspector from the department began arranging with the Turkish Muslim villagers of Morava and Liuliakovo (Aitos district, Burgas province) to sell their plots and houses so that the ministry would settle Bulgarian Christian villagers from Bov (Sofia province) where floods had destroyed a lot of land; in turn, the prospective 260 emigrants were apparently told that they would receive land in Turkey. They were supposed to be issued exit passports free of charge due to their poverty.¹¹⁷ But after the Second World War broke out the prospective emigrants refused to leave. In summer 1940 they cited fear, lack of Turkish visas, and the uncertainty of the political situation (though Bulgaria did not join the Axis until March 1941 and Turkey remained formally neutral).¹¹⁸ In September the chief of the Department for Domestic Resettlement requested permission from the minister of agriculture to force the Turks from Liuliakovo and Morava to sell their properties and emigrate. I have not been able to find archival documents providing further evidence whether the villagers indeed left the country, however, the minister did authorize the chief “to continue with the job.”¹¹⁹

This authorization was part of a broader interwar political trend of destroying basic citizenship rights. In December 1940 the parliament passed two laws that clearly showed the even greater tightening of the state’s grip on minorities as well as any opposition. The citizenship law that modified its 1903 predecessor made the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship harder while widening the possibilities for the government to strip people of their citizenship. The other law, titled “Law for the Defense of the Nation,” aimed to ensure the “purity” of the Bulgarian nation.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, the “Law for the Defense of the State” which was created after the first post-World War I coup in Bulgaria, the one that toppled

¹¹⁷ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2442, l. 20, 45–46; a. e. 2401, l. 6–7.

¹¹⁸ On Turkey during the Second World War, see Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy during the Second World War: An Active Neutrality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹¹⁹ TsDIA, f. 194k, op. 1, a. e. 2401, l. 6. The approval is written in the left margin.

¹²⁰ See the text of the laws in Evgeni Iochev, *Zakonodatelstvoto v tsarstvo Bŭlgariia (1879–1944 g.): konstitutsiia, zakoni, motivi, dokladi, ukazi, naredbi, naredbi-zakoni* (Sofia: Fondatsiia “Otvoreno Obshtestvo,” [1999]): “Zakon za bŭlgarsko podanstvo” (passed in parliament on 10 December 1940), 589–97, and “Zakon za zashtita na natsiata” (passed in parliament on 24 December 1940), 598–607.

BANU's government in 1923, remained in force. It was in fact modified and expanded a few months after Bulgaria entered the Second World War and then again in 1943.¹²¹ Royal dictatorships that terrorized opponents and oppressed minorities characterized the interwar Balkans where kings and their compliant political elites worked to control social, economic, and ethno-religious conflicts associated with the pains of postimperial state building and modernization but also exacerbated by the Great Depression.¹²²

Bulgarian officials aimed to control not only Turkish Muslim emigration, however. They worked to monitor any travel between Bulgaria and Turkey because they suspected all Muslims who crossed the Turkish–Bulgarian border of carrying out activities that endangered Bulgaria's territorial integrity. Police and army officials apprehensively reported about men traversing Bulgaria and agitating Turkish Muslims from the Shumen province to identify with Kemalism. Such men tried to convince the Shumen Turkish Muslims to immigrate to Turkey while Muslims from Kürdzhali and other parts of the southeast to identify as modern Turks. The Bulgarian authorities viewed sympathy for Kemalist Turkey as potential disloyalty and threat to national sovereignty. Consequently, they followed closely the activities of tobacco commissioners, teachers, merchants, and religious figures because they were the main conduits of Kemalist ideas in interwar Bulgaria.

The police kept individual files of those men who were considered especially dangerous and occasionally imprisoned or deported them internally.¹²³ Nonetheless, the Stara Zagora provincial police inspector St. Giurov stressed in 1937 that informants often exaggerated the gravity of the threat in order to ingratiate themselves with their superiors.¹²⁴ He explained that Muslim gatherings in mosques were part of the normal sociability and not a cause for concern, that neither Turks nor Pomaks in the borderland districts of Krumovgrad, Momchilgrad, Kürdzhali, and Ardino were armed, and that tobacco commissioners did not have a political agenda. Giurov did note, however, that Turkey did not accept emi-

¹²¹ See the changes in Iochev, *Zakonodatelstvoto v tsarstvo Bŭlgariia*, "Zakon za izmenenie i dopŭlnenie na zakona za zashtita na dŭrzhavata," 608–13.

¹²² For a succinct comparative narrative of royal dictatorships in the Balkans, see Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 324–40.

¹²³ See, for instance, TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 415, a. e. 419, a. e. 421, a. e. 423.

¹²⁴ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 1, a. e. 572, l. 1–4.

grants from the borderland Rhodope region. For him the primary culprits of Kemalist propaganda were the Turkish teachers (religious and secular) who, he pointed out, constantly spoke with the Pomaks to convince them of their Turkish descent, while the Bulgarian female teachers had affairs with wealthy Turks instead of raising the Bulgarian national consciousness of the Pomaks.

Giurov's attentiveness to the identity of Pomaks had resonated with officials since the late 1920s as they worried that young Pomaks were receptive to Kemalist propaganda and resentful of Bulgarian efforts at assimilation.¹²⁵ Moreover, shortly after the 1934 coup rumors circulated that there would be forcible conversions to Christianity, which prompted some Pomaks to cross the Greek border illegally from where the Greek officials handed them over to the Turkish authorities.¹²⁶ Since many Pomaks lived in Bulgarian, Greek, and Turkish Thrace, "folding" them into the Bulgarian nation would strengthen Bulgaria's claims to the region. On the other hand, their identification with Turkish nationalism would strengthen Turkish claims to Thrace, even though, unlike Bulgaria, Turkey was not committed to revising its post-World War I borders in the Balkans.

A confidential police report (dated July 1935) to the army headquarters argued that all possible legal measures should be taken to encourage the emigration of Turkish Muslims from the border regions while Pomaks should be strictly forbidden to leave, gradually assimilated, and converted to Orthodox Christianity.¹²⁷ The governor of the Plovdiv province, T. Ivanov, sent a confidential letter to the chief of staff of the army with a copy to the minister of the interior regarding the Muslim population of the Kŭrdzhali district. Ivanov explained that Kemalist propaganda successfully penetrated this borderland region via Turkish tobacco commissioners who traveled to the most remote villages to collect and price the tobacco leaves while advocating Turkish nationalist ideas.¹²⁸ Tobacco producers could be at the mercy of commissioners. The Pomaks made a living primarily from tobacco cultivation and when they could not sell their tobacco leaves or sold them cheaply, were forced to sell their goats, sometimes even crossing the border south to Greece or east to Turkey.¹²⁹ During Otto-

¹²⁵ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 1, a. e. 346, l. 1–12.

¹²⁶ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 1, a. e. 31, l. 7–7 g.

¹²⁷ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 507, l. 9.

¹²⁸ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 1, a. e. 31, l. 3–4.

¹²⁹ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 7, a. e. 751, l. 2.

man times the Pomaks had been especially involved in sheepherding and had spent the summers in the Bulgarian Rhodope and the winters in the Greek Aegean. This type of lifestyle had become impossible in the world of nation-states. Bulgarian authorities worried that because the Bulgarian economy had been fledgling after WWI and then, like most Balkan states, was hard hit by the spread of the Great Depression in the early 1930s, the Pomaks would support any state or political ideology, including Kemalism, so long as they could have access to Aegean Thrace and renew their prenational economy.¹³⁰

The police and the army followed tensely the public life of Turkish Muslims in the southeast since they equated Kemalism with irredentism. During the political crisis in the months preceding the 1934 coup, the Interior Ministry circulated information that Turks were taking advantage of partisan squabbles to accomplish “chauvinist goals.” “To the observant eye is clear,” the report of the ministry stated, that the Turkish schools in the districts of Shumen, Mastanli, Pashmakli, Petrich, and others, “have become hotbeds of Kemalist propaganda. This population has come to believe that it can circumvent any law in the country” especially because, according to the report, Muslims had retained weapons from the Balkan Wars and the First World War. “Something is being fomented” the report continued, citing the travels between Bulgaria and Turkey of “*hocas* without passports,” “healers,” and “fake merchants” who traversed these areas to mobilize the Muslim Turkish population and instill anti-Bulgarian sentiments.¹³¹ In the fall of 1934, Mr. Katskov, who was the provincial governor of Plovdiv, sent a coded telegram to the minister of the interior as well as to the director of the police informing them that the Plovdiv-based newspaper *Rodopski Novini* (Rhodope Mountains News) gathered the names of potential visitors to Turkey to participate in events celebrating the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Three hundred and fifty-seven people had already signed up, Katskov noted alarmingly, and all of them were from Kŭrdzhali. Since the trip was intended to serve the goals of Kemalist propaganda, he explained, the authorities were obliged to ban it.¹³² Considering the prevalence of illegal migration, it seems doubtful that they succeeded in preventing people from traveling to attend these commemorative events.

¹³⁰ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 427, l. 119, 119.

¹³¹ Ibid., l. 100–100 g.

¹³² TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 7, a. e. 748, l. 1.

Teachers made Bulgarian authorities nervous the most partly because they linked, as it were, the young generation of Bulgaria's Muslims to the promises and dynamism of the Kemalist project in Turkey. The Turkish government provided three annual scholarships to the best Turkish Muslim graduates from middle schools to continue their education in Turkey. Winners were determined through a competition under the auspices of the Turkish embassy and with the help of teachers from the Turkish schools in Bulgaria. Essay topics for the competitions included questions about the great qualities of Mustafa Kemal as a reformer and the history of the Turkish Republic. Only those candidates who could read and write in the newly adopted Latin alphabet for Turkish were allowed to participate. Apparently students whose parents were considered to be "trustworthy for Turkey" were given preference in these competitions.¹³³

Plovdiv Governor T. Ivanov listed in 1935 Turkish Muslim teachers who were residents of Kŭrdzhali and Kemalist activists, notably the director of the Turkish school in Kŭrdzhali, Feyzi Ahmedov. Ivanov was especially alarmed that a former teacher was an activist of the outlawed Turkish nationalist organization Altın Ordu (Golden Army).¹³⁴ Teachers from Turkish schools in the northeastern city of Shumen accompanied by a *hoca* also traversed Pomak villagers in the southeast, spreading Kemalist ideas. *Hocas* from Turkey, according to the Ministry of War, traveled through Pomak villages in the border areas of southeast and southwest Bulgaria as well, and lived off the local population.¹³⁵ While local groups espousing Kemalist ideas did not keep written records of their meetings, activities, or membership, Ivanov explained, he knew about their goals from one Mŭmŭn Acikov whom Ivanov had interrogated twice after his return from Edirne: "The goal of the propaganda is to maintain vigilant national spirit among the Turks and the Pomaks and to spread the ideas of Kemal as well as the belief that these lands are Turkish and soon will be joined to Turkey by an uprising."¹³⁶

Ivanov nonetheless wrote with cautious optimism, "I find that the plans of the Turks are hard to realize in practice because the local Turkish population does not give in so easily and moreover opposition [*reakciiata*]

¹³³ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 423, l. 86.

¹³⁴ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 1, a. e. 31, l. 4.

¹³⁵ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 6, a. e. 751, l. 1, 2.

¹³⁶ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 1, a. e. 31, l. 4.

to Kemalism is strong.”¹³⁷ Officials from the southwest region of Pashmakli also believed that the Pomaks and the Turkish Muslims from there strongly embraced traditional Ottoman culture and Islam.¹³⁸ In addition, Ivanov advised his superiors in 1935 to encourage Bulgarians to avoid offending the religious feelings of Pomaks, cheating them, or mistreating them as transgressors of their “true” identity.¹³⁹ Ultimately, by “cautiously revealing the national [*narodni*] truths,” as Ivanov put it, the Pomaks would understand their real heritage. Officials cited with relief their success in preventing the organizations Turan and Altın Ordu from using local *hocas* and *imams* to nationalize Muslims.¹⁴⁰ Yet, Ivanov warned, “in a moment of mass infatuation” Turks from the Kŭrdzhali region might pose a threat to the state, especially since in some municipalities there were only “five to six Bulgarians and hence practically no one to rely on.”¹⁴¹

In an article taken out of circulation by the police, a Bulgarian journalist explained that the Turks from the Kŭrdzhali region were “lazy,” “easily infected with the propaganda spread among our Turks by Kemalist Turkey,” and “indulge in politics.”¹⁴² Such dangerous volatility could be addressed, Ivanov suggested, by gradually “assimilating [*priobshtavane*]” both the Turkish speakers and the Pomaks in the Kŭrdzhali region.¹⁴³ Thus, in 1937 the Bulgarian authorities as well as a group of prominent educated Pomaks from the Rhodope region set up an association called Rodina (Motherland) to help modernize the lives of Pomaks.¹⁴⁴ Put differently, anxious about the real and imagined successes of Kemalist propaganda, Bulgarian authorities began domesticating Kemalist ideas in order to sever the links between the Pomaks and Turkey and to “remake the Pomak community in the Bulgarian image.”¹⁴⁵ This entailed, as Neuburger has argued, shedding Ottoman and Muslim styles of clothing and

¹³⁷ Ibid., I. 4.

¹³⁸ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 427, l. 119, 119 g.

¹³⁹ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 1, a. e. 31, l. 5.

¹⁴⁰ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 427, l. 119, 119 g.

¹⁴¹ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 1, a. e. 31, l. 4.

¹⁴² TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 423, l. 11.

¹⁴³ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 1, a. e. 31, l. 5, 6.

¹⁴⁴ See Mikhail Gruev, “Bŭlgarite miusiulmani i kemalistkoto dvizhenie v Rodopite (1919–1939 g.),” in *Moderniia Istorik: Vŭobrazhenie, Informiranost, Pokoleniia*, ed. K. Grozev and T. Popnadelev (Sofia: IK “Daniela Ubenova,” 1999), 218–27.

¹⁴⁵ Neuburger, *The Orient Within*, 97.

public comportment for men as well as women, such as wearing the fez, the turban, and the *shalvar*,¹⁴⁶ and, of course, the veil. Unlike during the Balkan Wars, when assimilation involved forced conversion, Rodina attempted in the interwar years to distinguish religion from nationality and to persuade rather than force change, though with very limited success.¹⁴⁷ Managing “Turkish identity,” however, proved more difficult as we will see in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁶ Baggy pants worn especially by Pomak women.

¹⁴⁷ Neuburger, *The Orient Within*, 88–99.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Debating Community and Citizenship

Despite the continuous Muslim emigration from interwar Bulgaria, by the outbreak of the Second World War, the two most numerous Muslim populations—Turkish Muslims and Pomaks—accounted for about 10 percent of the total population of Bulgaria.¹ If they did not immigrate to Turkey (or perhaps until they did) how were they to conduct their lives in Bulgaria? A pressing question indeed because with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the early republican Kemalist elite began articulating a modern, secular, etatist Turkish national identity that aimed to erase imperial self-identifications and suppress alternative visions.² Fundamental issues such as the role of Islam in public life, the content of school curricula, the script for the Turkish language, and the Ottoman past itself became topics for debate on which Bulgaria's Turkish Muslims often disagreed. Their debates stirred profound searching and conflicts over the meanings of modern Muslim subjectivity. These conflicts in turn involved the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs (MFCA), which supervised the Muslim Confessional Organizations (MCOs) that managed nearly every aspect of Muslim public life. Other branches and levels of government were drawn in as well because the capacity to impose educational content, to appoint clerical or educational personnel, and to disseminate conceptions of the Ottoman past required control of properties and other material resources which

¹ See tables in chapter 6.

² On the antiliberal and violent characteristics of Kemalism, see Hamit Bozarslan, "Kemalism, Westernization, and Anti-Liberalism," in *Turkey beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. H.-L. Kieser (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

ultimately depended on state law and politics. Two rival conceptualizations of modern Muslim subjectivity transpired in the process, one centered on Islam (*cemiyet*) and the other centered on ethnicity (the Turkish nation, or *millet*). Both, unwittingly, as I argue in this final chapter, contributed to the forging of a separate Turkish Muslim public space and to the consolidation of a Turkish minority burdened with the Ottoman past.

My analysis develops in three stages. I begin with a dispute over the material and symbolic ownership of a dervish lodge, which compelled Turkish Muslims to deal with the Bulgarian authorities by pushing aside ideological fissures, appearing, conveniently from the perspective of officials, as a coherent group. I complicate this ostensible unity by examining the power struggles within the MCOs between sympathizers and detractors of Kemalism. I close the chapter with a discussion of the larger debates about Turkish communal imagination which unfolded mainly in Turkish-language newspapers.

DEMİR BABA TEKKE: THE IMPERIAL PAST IN THE NATIONAL PRESENT

In the 1920s and 1930s the ownership and purpose of the Ottoman dervish lodge (*tekke*), called “Demir Baba” generated a heated debate. The newspaper *Rehber* (Guide) and the Office of the Chief Müftü both claimed Demir Baba for Bulgaria’s Turkish Muslims in order to prevent Bulgarian archeological societies from appropriating the lodge as a national historical site. For Turkish Muslims, the value of Ottoman material remains lay in their power to demonstrate the rootedness, the historical intransience, of Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria where their presence defied the common to the times nationalist aspirations for national homogeneity and demographic continuity. Consequently, Kemalist sympathizers in Bulgaria could not afford to denigrate the Ottoman past as Kemalists in Turkey did. There, the early republican state builders and writers of history aimed to “resolve” the conflict between the Turkish nation and its backward Ottoman past by introducing a distinction between the *Turkish Nation* and the *People*: the former represented “‘the Glorious Future’ ... while [the latter] represented the immediate and corrupted Ottoman ‘past.’” Modernization would shake off that past from the people, thereby turning them into a Turkish nation.³

³ Bozarslan, “Kemalism, Westernization, and Anti-Liberalism,” 31.

Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria faced the challenge of both holding onto a useful Ottoman past and rejecting their association with backwardness that the invocation of that past prompted.

The smaller community of Muslims, the Shi'i Kızılbaş, who actually used the lodge for religious practice, were marginalized in the debate: on one hand, neither *Rehber* nor the Office of the Chief Müftü professed particular concern for the Kızılbaş, seamlessly folding them into the ostensibly clearly demarcated community of Sunni Muslim Turks; on the other hand, the archeological society of the district of Razgrad in northeastern Bulgaria (where the lodge was located) skillfully merged its own nationalist agenda with claims about securing the religious practice of Muslims in the region.

Demir Baba Tekke was a dervish lodge that was probably founded in the sixteenth century in the Deliorman region. Demir (Timur) Baba was considered the spiritual successor of Otman Baba, who was one of the most revered heterodox Muslim holy men in the Ottoman Balkans.⁴ Sunni as well as heterodox dervishes accompanied the Ottoman troops on their conquests of the medieval Balkans and facilitated the spread of Islam.⁵ After the foundation of modern Bulgaria through the interwar years, writers of local histories as well as popular and academic historians, noted the existence of Shi'i places of worship and saint veneration while paying attention to the fact that such places were also visited by Christians. And while no thematic scholarly tradition resulted from such casual research, its authors came to believe that Muslim religious buildings were erected upon old churches.⁶ This interpretive move was useful in demonstrating the indigenesness of both Christianity and Bulgarians, both preserved after centuries of Ottoman domination.

Probably aware of these claims, Anani Iavashov, chair of the Razgrad Archeological Association and a member of parliament from the Democratic Party, built his own case about the *tekke* as masking Bulgarian history waiting to be unearthed and told.⁷ In 1927, the Turkish language

⁴ See Nevena Gramatikova, *Neortodoksalmiät Islam v Bülgarskite Zemi: Minalo i Suvremennost* (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2011), 231–54, and “Otman Baba-One of the Spiritual Patrons of Islamic Heterodoxy in Bulgarian Lands,” *Études balkaniques* 3 (2002): 71–102.

⁵ See Antonina Zheliazkova, *Razprostranenie na isliama v zapadnobalkanskite zemi pod osmanska vlast: XV–XVIII vek* (Sofia: BAN, 1990).

⁶ Gramatikova, *Neortodoksalmiät Islam*, 29.

⁷ Interestingly, Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, the internationally reknown historian of the Ottoman Empire, wrote an article in 1922 about the development of Turkish national identity. According to him, Oğuz Turkmen had practiced shamanism as

newspaper *Rehber* came out with two editorials responding to articles that Iavashov had published in the Bulgarian language newspapers *Mir* and *Zname*.⁸ *Rehber*'s editorial, titled, "Is the Demir Baba Tekke the Tomb of the Saint Demir Baba or Is It the Grave of Tsar Omurtag?" criticized Iavashov for presenting the Turks as usurpers of the lodge. Iavashov argued that they had unlawfully taken over the lodge by classifying it as part of a *vakıf*, thereby subordinating it to the Muslim Confessional Organization-Razgrad. Claiming to defend it, and thus to be preserving tradition, he had initiated the subordination of the *tekke* to the Razgrad Society for the Protection of Antiquities (*Druzhestvo za Zashtita na Starinite*). As chair of the parliament he worked toward this goal, despite the consistent protests of a member of parliament, Hafız Sadık Efendi. In contrast, *Rehber* argued that the owners of the *tekke* were both its heirs and its lawful proprietors. A lawyer had been hired to procure the title deed, but he had evidently been accused by Iavashov of harming Bulgarian national interests. The editorial also mocked Iavashov's professed goal of preserving the *tekke* as a means of protecting the country's traditions because he believed it to be the site of the grave of the proto-Bulgarian tsar Omurtag (814–831).⁹ In conclusion, *Rehber* summoned its readers to defend their traditions against the attempts of the association to usurp the property of Demir Baba Tekke. Religious practice was not an issue in the publication; at stake was the role of the *tekke* as a repository of Muslim heritage and communal property.

well as Mandaeanism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Christianity before arriving to Anatolia. These religious and cultural practices left a lasting imprint upon the ethnic culture of the Turks even after their Islamicization. These heterogeneous religious and cultural practices were continued by the Sufis in the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires to develop into Turkish Sufi Muslims who were distinct from Arab and Persian Sufis. Köprülü argued that the core of the Ottoman Empire remained Turkish even after converts to Islam joined the administration. For this, and a very interesting discussion of Köprülü, see Karpas, *The Politicization of Islam*, 396–402.

⁸ *Rehber* 13, 13 April 1927; 17, 12 May 1927.

⁹ For Omurtag, see John V. A. Fine, Jr., *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 106; the prominent Bulgarian medievalist at the time, Vasil Zlatarski (1866–1935), *did not* claim that Omurtag's grave was located in the area of the *tekke*, which was in the village of Mumcular/Sveshtari. Zlatarski located Omurtag's grave in another village further north in the Silistra district. See Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoriia na Bŭlgarskata Dŭrzhava prez Srednite Vekove, Chast I: Epokha na Hunno-Bŭlgarskoto Nadmoshtie (679–852)* (Sofia: Dŭrzhavna Pechatnitsa, 1918), 328–29.

That the lodge became a contested site is emblematic of the strategy to use “history” in order to cope with the crisis of Bulgarian nationalism in the interwar years. This process overlapped with Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria making sense of “their” Ottoman history following the establishment of the Turkish Republic. How could a Muslim monument be of interest to Bulgarians wishing to preserve their cultural heritage? Of interest to archeologists and historians was the alleged pre-Ottoman past of the lodge, specifically its assumed proto-Bulgarian and Thracian ancestry. Focused on locating the roots of Bulgarians and their civilization in ancient, non-Slavic, and non-Turkic sources that were equal, if not superior, to European sources, Iavashov and others like him sought to reinscribe Muslim and/or Turkic remnants from the Ottoman past into an empowering narrative of ethno-genesis. This was partly due to the disillusionment with the European powers after the Great War, which led Bulgarians to doubt and refuse to imitate all that was “foreign,” reaching instead for the inner strength of that which was distinctly and originally Bulgarian.¹⁰ Partly, this focus on ethno-genesis was really a rewriting of the earlier story of ethno-genesis that emphasized Bulgarians’ Slavic origins, hence affinity with Russia the liberator, and belonging to the European family of nations. The Slavic thesis came under attack in the interwar years because Russia and Bulgaria were on opposite sides in the First World War and because most Bulgarian governments shared authoritarian and anticommunist views that blended with anti-Soviet, anti-Russian, and anti-Slavic attitudes.¹¹ Thus, the interwar search for the ancestry of the Bulgarians emphasized their uniqueness, which resulted from the Proto-Bulgarians, who merged with the more numerous Slavs and gave them their original political traditions.¹² A third component of the ethno-genesis, the Thracian ancestry of the Bulgarians (already being elaborated during the second half of the nineteenth century) also gained prominence in the interwar years. Emphasis on the rootedness

¹⁰ Ivan Elenkov, *Rodno i Diasno: Prinos kŭm Kulturnata Istoriia na Nesbŭdnatiia Desen Proekt v Bŭlgariia ot Vremeto mezhdu Dvete Svetovni Voimi* (Sofia: LIK, 1998), 31–41; Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto Obshtestvo 1878–1939 (Tom 2)*, 431–35.

¹¹ Ilija Iliev, “The Proper Use of Ancestors,” *Ethnologia Balkanica* 2 (1998): 7–18, here 7; Tchavdar Marinov, “Ancient Thrace in the Modern Imagination: Ideological Aspects of the Construction of Thracian Studies in Southeast Europe (Romania, Greece, Bulgaria),” in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans, Volume Three: Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies*, ed. Roumen Daskalov and Alexander Vezhenkov (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 76.

¹² Iliev, “The Proper Use of Ancestors,” 8.

of the Bulgarians in Thrace served to refute modern Greek claims to that contested territory¹³ and, not less importantly Turkish ones.

These preoccupations with Bulgarian ethno-genesis were similar to the efforts of official Kemalist historians to trace the roots of contemporary Turks to pre-Islamic, pre-Ottoman Central Asia, where they had also created a civilization whose values were akin to those of the West. Likewise, Kemalist sympathizers and detractors in Bulgaria occupied themselves with the question of Turkic origins and history so as to claim belonging either to a Turkish nation (*millet*) or a transnational Muslim community (*cemiyet*). These opposing perspectives are vividly captured by several articles published in the newspaper *Medeniyet* (the mouthpiece of the Office of the Chief Müftü in Sofia) during the months of May and June in 1934. The articles compared Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) with the Mongol ruler Hülegü Khan (the grandson of Genghis Khan and the founder of the Ilkhanid dynasty).¹⁴ Their author, Ali Vasfi, teacher at the Nüvvab School in Shumen (the only higher education institution for Bulgaria's Muslims) and the son-in-law of Mustafa Sabri Efendi, the former Ottoman Sheykh ul-Islam, was a fervent opponent of the emerging Turkish nation-state.¹⁵ Ali Vasfi linked Mustafa Kemal and Kemalism to the pre-Ottoman "barbarian" Mongol Hülegü Khan to emphasize how destructive the conceptualization of the Muslim community along national lines could be.¹⁶

¹³ Marinov, "Ancient Thrace in the Modern Imagination," esp. 78–86.

¹⁴ R. Amitai, "Hulagu Khan," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 15 December 2004, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hulagu-khan>.

¹⁵ Sabri had escaped from Istanbul in late 1922 as the Turkish nationalist forces repulsed the Greek army. He lived in Egypt, the Hejaz, Lebanon, Italy, and Romania, and in 1927 settled in Greek western Thrace among the Muslim minority in the city of Xanthi. There he became the principal writer for the journal *Yarın* (Tomorrow), which addressed primarily Muslims in the Balkans but was also smuggled into Turkey. Sabri Efendi used the platform of *Yarın* to launch a campaign against the introduction of the modified Latin script in Turkish schools. Upon Greek–Turkish rapprochement in the 1930s he moved to Egypt. See Keskiöglü, *Bulgararistan'da Türkler*, 90, 95; Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic*, 111–12; Yannis Bonos, "The Turkish Spelling Mistakes Episode in Greek Thrace, June 1929: Beyond Modernists versus Conservatives," in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, ed. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 371–85.

¹⁶ He may have been influenced by Mustafa Sabri Efendi's determined anti-nationalism, which set him apart even from many other ulema in Turkey who, like him, resented the Turkification of religious life. On this point, see Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic*, chapter 6.

Medeniyet's "Mongol"—"Turk" juxtaposition also took place at a time when the Turkish republican elite were hard at work creating and popularizing an official historiographical approach to imperial and national histories, known as the Turkish History Theses. Their ambitious goal was to embed Turks in the story of Western civilization by producing theories that claimed the Turks had created the most ancient Western civilization or that modern Europeans could be traced back along racial lines to Turkish ancestors.¹⁷ One line of the emerging official historiography stressed that "the Turks have no connection with the 'yellow race' or with the Mongols; quite to the contrary, as Aryans, they belong to the white race."¹⁸ Early republican writers of history began integrating race in their historical narrative in order to give Turks clear important roles in the evolution of human civilization.¹⁹ Central in the enterprise was disentangling Turks from Islam because it had masked their true history, hence the emphasis on recovering a "genealogy" of the Turks in Anatolia by turning the Hittites—the harbingers of Classical Antiquity—into the ancient ancestors of the Turks.²⁰ And while explicit reference to this narrative or racial language is absent from the *Medeniyet* articles, the act of likening Atatürk to Hülegü Khan in the 1930s seems too provocative to be a coincidence at a time when some of the Kemalist elite in Turkey were striving to show affinity with white, and thus modern, civilized Europe. That *Medeniyet* in effect depicted Mustafa Kemal as a destructive, uncivilized Mongol struck at the linkage between race and modernity that was creeping into

¹⁷ Ersanlı, "The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era," 116; Murat Ergin, "'Is the Turk a White Man?': Towards a Theoretical Framework for Race in the Making of Turkishness," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44 no. 6 (2008), 833. See Copeaux, *Espaces et temps de la nation turque*, 62–74; and Wendy Shaw, "The Rise of the Hittite Sun: A Deconstruction of Western Civilization from the Margin," in *Selective Remembrances: Archeology in the Construction, Commemoration, and Consecration of National Pasts*, ed. Philip L. Kohl et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 170–71.

¹⁸ Ersanlı, "The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era," 116.

¹⁹ On the institutional links between empire and republic, see Erik J. Zürcher, "Institution Building in the Kemalist Republic Compared with Pahlavi Iran: The People's Party," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 246–58. For an analysis of history writing and historiographical questions in the late Ottoman Empire, see Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks, and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007).

²⁰ Copeaux, *Espaces et temps de la nation turque*, 52–56.

the official historiographical line.²¹ Ali Vasfi quite likely also responded to Ahmet Gültekin, the founder of the Kemalist-leaning newspaper *Turan*. His 1932 article titled “A Historical Virtue” proclaimed that “the pages of every nation’s [*millet*] past are filled with noble things and every nation has specific racial [*ırkı*] virtues.”²² Earlier publications in the newspaper *Deliorman* had also linked Bulgaria’s Turkish Muslims to the histories of pre-Ottoman and pre-Islamic Turkic people of Anatolia and Central Asia.²³ One letter to the editor in particular extolled the cultural and scientific accomplishments of the “Turkish civilization in Bursa,” attributing them exclusively to the genius of the Turks which both transcended and predated their Islamicization.²⁴ When it came to the Demir Baba lodge, as we will see below, it was Islam rather than the Turkic ethnos that Turkish Muslims used to claim the *tekke*.

In other words, symbolic and material contestations over the *tekke* invoked different pasts to serve rival political agendas: the unearthing of Bulgarian proto-nationalism or the historical continuity of Islam in the Balkans. As curator in the archeological museum in the town of Razgrad, Anani Iavashov accompanied a special commission from the Archeological Institute in Sofia on a visit to the lodge in the summer of 1924.²⁵ Following this visit, the commission concluded that the lodge complex was in a pitiful condition.²⁶ Worse, the pious-charitable endowments department of the MCO-Razgrad collected the revenue from the arable land, pasture, wood groves, and watermills, which were mistakenly considered to be part of the lodge complex. In 1889, the Principality of Bulgaria had allowed a few villages in the vicinity of the lodge to use these properties. The buildings of the lodge were entrusted to the care of the villages’ representative, Ali Rıza Hacı Afuzov; upon his death, all the properties were usurped by the MCO-Razgrad. The special commission of the Archeological Institute in Sofia considered the MCO-Razgrad to be an illegal owner of the Demir Baba complex. According to Iavashov, all the professors at the institute

²¹ Ergin, “Is the Turk a White Man?,” 832–34.

²² Ahmet Gültekin, “Tarihî bir haslet” [A historical virtue], *Turan* (Kırcaali) 3, 1 March 1932

²³ *Deliorman* 121, 26 February 1925; *Deliorman* 147, 14 August 1925.

²⁴ *Deliorman* 147, 14 August 1925; this was published in the rubric “Letters” to the newspaper. Perhaps there is reliance here on Fuat Köprülü’s *Türk edebiyatında ilk mutasavvıflar* (1919) or *Türkiye tarihi* (1923).

²⁵ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 119, l. 38.

²⁶ It had burned during the 1828–29 Russo-Ottoman War.

considered the Demir Baba Tekke to be the grave of the Bulgarian tsar Omurtag.²⁷

In the fall of the same year, archeological societies from northeastern Bulgaria attended a meeting of the Bulgarian Antiquity (*Bŭlgarska Starina*) association, at which Demir Baba Tekke was classified as a national Bulgarian historical site (*narodna bŭlgarska starina*). Those attending the meeting also decided to do all that was in their power 1) to place the Demir Baba Tekke under the care of the Razgrad Archeological Association; 2) to ensure that all the revenue that had been collected until that point by MCO-Razgrad would be used for annual upkeep and renovation of the lodge complex; 3) to use any remaining portion of the revenue for regular archeological digs in order to fully comprehend the “true [*sŭshtinsko*]” importance of the site. Thus, Iavashov argued in his appeal to the district governor, “every national Bulgarian feeling would be assuaged.” The lodge and the beautiful region, he added, were regularly visited by tourists, while local Bulgarians celebrated St. Elias Day there. Nothing should stop the Bulgarians, Iavashov concluded, from preserving this “old Bulgarian sanctity,” which had been left to people interested only in profiting from it, not in its real value.²⁸ He reiterated his views to the district governor again in 1925 and then proceeded to publish his ideas in newspapers, a move that was criticized by *Rehber*. In 1930, after years of data collection and observation, Iavashov published a book, *Razgrad: Its Archeological and Historical Past*.²⁹ And in 1934 he published a book specifically on the *tekke*, titled *Tekke Demir Baba: An Ancient Bulgarian Shrine*,³⁰ documenting the legends surrounding Demir Baba, including those he collected during his interviews with the local Kızılbaş Muslims.³¹

The MCO-Razgrad was somewhat less dramatic in defending its right to manage Demir Baba and, unlike *Rehber*, did not engage explicitly with Iavashov’s thesis that the lodge was the site of Tsar Omurtag’s grave. The organization repeatedly stated that all Bulgarian laws and special regulations on Muslims had entitled the MCO to manage the Demir Baba as a *vakıf* complex. This was true enough, since the Tempo-

²⁷ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 119, l. 38.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 38, 39.

²⁹ Anani Iavashov, *Razgrad: Negovoto Arkheologicheskoto i Istoricheskoto Minalo* (Razgrad: Razvitie, 1930).

³⁰ Anani Iavashov, *Teketo Demir Baba: Bŭlgarska Starina Svetinia* (Razgrad: Razgradsko Arkheologicheskoto Druzhestvo, 1934).

³¹ Gramatikova, *Neortodoksniiat Islam*, 262–72.

rary Regulations for the Religious Rule of Muslims (1895) and the Statute for the Religious Organization and Rule of Muslims in the Bulgarian Kingdom (1919) had mandated that Muslim endowments be governed by special administrative bodies connected to the Islamic religious hierarchy. The Statute specifically empowered MCOs to take over the management of *vakıfs*. MCO-Razgrad maintained the same line of argumentation in 1936, when the Ministry of Agriculture employed a special law to demand the appropriation of arable lands that were part of the complex.³² MCO-Razgrad kept insisting for the next three years that the state appropriation of Demir Baba would “deeply offend the religious feelings of the Muslim population” whose “religious customs” were inextricably linked to the *tekke*. The Office of the Chief Müftü backed the MCO-Razgrad but stuck to formal legal language reiterating the “undisputable” *vakıf* status of Demir Baba and hence insisting that it naturally belonged to Muslims.³³

In other words, both Iavashov and *Rehber* disputed the “right” to define and defend “the tradition” and “the history” of Bulgarian Christians in the first case and of Turkish Muslims in the second case. Both Iavashov and *Rehber* could be perceived on some level as contributing to the “invention of tradition.”³⁴ Paying attention to the language of the dispute as well as to the logic of arguments in claiming the Demir Baba Tekke reveals that at stake was the power to delineate the time and space in which the histories of Turkish Muslims and Bulgarian Christians took place. Ultimately, at stake was the power to disentangle or to reassemble these entwined histories so as to foster national self-identification.

Iavashov’s line of argumentation evolved from his first public assertions in 1924 when he argued that for religious purposes the lodge could be left to Muslims but that all other properties and revenue had to be used for renovation, maintenance, and archeological digs. He believed that the digs in particular would help the accumulation of knowledge about the history of the Bulgarians before the Ottoman conquest. Hence the importance of Tsar Omurtag’s grave and Iavashov’s hopeful guess that the grave of his father, the proto-Bulgarian Tsar Krum (803–814), could be in the

³² Iochev, *Zakonodatelstvo v Tsarstvo Bŭlgariia*, 426–33.

³³ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 119, l. 88, 89, 93.

³⁴ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, “Introduction,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

area of the mountains of the Deliorman as well.³⁵ In his history of the town of Razgrad and the region, Iavashov traced the pre-Ottoman “genealogy” of places and duly recorded (sometimes illustrated) the existence of Roman and Greek artifacts, such as statues of gods, which residents (including Muslims) brought to his attention.³⁶ Keen on reconnecting his Bulgarian contemporaries with their ancestral civilization, by the early 1930s Iavashov and the Razgrad Archeological Society actually turned to the recent Ottoman past in order to affirm the thesis that the existence of the lodge as such was an anachronism.

In 1932 Iavashov tried to buttress his case that the MCO-Razgrad had no legal right to manage the Demir Baba complex by invoking the decision of the late Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839) to abolish the Janissary corps in 1826, outlaw the Bektashi order (to which Demir Baba, he insisted, belonged) associated with the Janissaries, confiscate its properties and sell or lease them. A man from Istanbul had apparently bought the Demir Baba complex but fled during the Russo-Ottoman War (1877–78) and never returned.³⁷ In 1888, the Ministry of Finance granted the request of six villages near the lodge to use it for religious services as well as to care for the other properties associated with the lodge. Following administrative reforms in 1901 (the district of Razgrad was folded into the district of Ruse), the head of the district decided to place the entire *tekke* complex under the care of the MCO-Razgrad, basing his decision on the 1895 Temporary Regulations. All of this, according to Iavashov, demonstrated that the MCO-Razgrad possessed the Demir Baba illegally and wrongly. “I am convinced,” he wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture, “that the motive for transferring the *tekke* and its properties to the *vakıf* committee was that it [the *tekke*] was ruled once upon a time by Turks; a motive that is not only indefensible but also shameful for every Bulgarian, especially now, when the once-Turkish Deliorman is becoming Bulgarian.” The demography of the Deliorman had changed, Iavashov explained: the six villages that had requested to use the Demir Baba complex had witnessed a growth in the number of Bulgarian residents, evidenced by the increased number of schools. Thus, the Demir Baba properties should be used for these schools, instead of being given to the “*vakıf* committee that

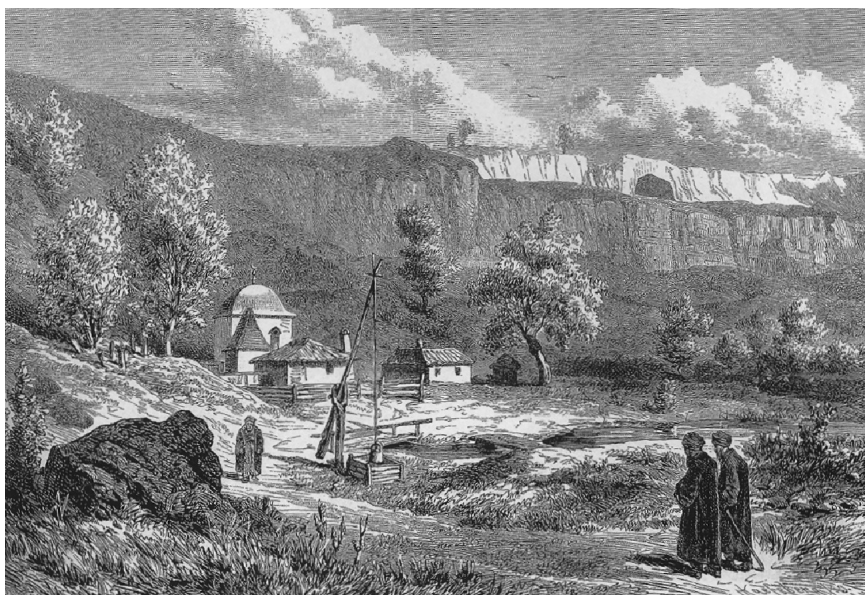
³⁵ Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, 94–99; TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 119, l. 62.

³⁶ Iavashov, *Razgrad*, 42–44.

³⁷ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 119, l. 64.

belongs to another time” and might even use revenues for “antinational purposes.”³⁸

Iavashov went even further in reinscribing the lodge into the Bulgarian national present and the continuation of the Bulgarian nation into the future. Since Bulgarians from around the Deliorman gathered to celebrate St. Elias Day in the Demir Baba complex, the lodge “was no longer a religious place but had become a national heritage site, where perhaps the remains of the Great Bulgarian Tsar Omurtag are buried.” The Deliorman, he suggested, was a place of Bulgarian folklore, full of bagpipe and violin sounds, songs, and dances. In other words, the Razgrad Archeological Society worked “to save the glorious grave of Omurtag from ruination,” hoping thus to “fulfill and calm the Bulgarian spirit and feeling.” The society’s goals even included turning the beautiful valley of the lodge into a national park, which would be a unique place for recreation in northeastern Bulgaria.³⁹



A drawing of the Demir Baba Tekke from the late 19th century by Felix Kanitz captures the area as an old Ottoman landscape. Iavashov perceived this sort of imagination of the tekke and the Deliorman region in general as anachronism. In contrast he wished for the tekke to become a modern national park.

³⁸ Ibid., l. 64, 65.

³⁹ Ibid., l. 65.

Rehber's second editorial specifically targeted Iavashov's reference to Sultan Mahmud II, insisting that only the arable lands of the complex had been sold.⁴⁰ The editorial neither discussed the consequences of the abolition of the Bektashi order nor questioned the belonging of the *tekke* to the order. Instead, the newspaper invoked the 1895 Temporary Regulations as well as the 1919 Statute, both of which bestowed on Muslims the right to manage property connected to their religious and cultural practices. Meanwhile, *Rehber* reached further back into Ottoman history, relying on the authority of the famous traveler Evliya Çelebi to counter Iavashov's assertions that the lodge never had any properties that were part of an endowment. Iavashov had also turned to the travelogue of Evliya Çelebi to demonstrate that he had not mentioned the *tekke* while traveling through Razgrad and the Deliorman. To prove him wrong, the editorial provided the volume and page number from Evliya's work.⁴¹ *Rehber* won the rhetorical battle over the Ottoman past—Iavashov did not have the language skills necessary to access that past, and must have relied on an inaccurate or incomplete translation. In other words, the Deliorman could not be taken from the Turks and showed the link of contemporary Turks with the Ottoman Empire and hence their continuous presence in the territory of modern Bulgaria.

At the same time, however, Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria did not view the Ottoman Empire through an identical lens. They fashioned and used the Ottoman past in agreement with or disapproval of contemporary Turkey where the reconceptualization of the Ottoman Empire served to justify the secular, nationalist, and modernist project of building the Turkish Republic. Ultimately, at stake was the redefinition of both "Muslim" and "Turk" as embodiments of the category of minority group within the nation-state of Bulgaria. And the pressing question was: What "remnants from the old civilization"⁴²—to use the title of a letter to the newspaper *Deliorman*—and which civilization should be inscribed in the present and future of Turkish Muslims as Bulgarian citizens? Answers to this question, essentially of what was "useful" history in shaping Turkish Muslim identity, revolved around interlinked debates about civilization, tradition

⁴⁰ "Demir Baba tekkesindeki mezar Demir Baba'nın merkad mıydı, yoksa çar Omurtağ'ın mezar mıydı?" [Is the Demir Baba tekke the tomb of the Saint Demir Baba or is it the grave of Tsar Omurtag?], *Rehber* 17, 16 May 1927.

⁴¹ Gramatikova shows that Evliya Çelebi's travelogue contained information about his visit to the lodge: see *Neortodoksalmîiat İslam*, 414–15.

⁴² *Deliorman* 147, 14 August 1925; this was published in the rubric "Letters" to the newspaper.

(*anane*), religion (*din*), and knowledge (*ilim* or *bilgi*). Attention-grabbing, polarizing, and fascinating, these debates were most conspicuous in the press. Less visible and more consequential were the acrimonious struggles among Turkish Muslims over their communal properties—most often *vakıfs* supporting schools and mosques—because control over them ensured the implementation of a particular agenda. Since *vakıfs* were put under the care of MCOs, rivalries over the management of these MCOs proved crucial to the elaboration of modern Muslim subjectivity that was in conversation with the Ottoman past.

COMMUNITY AFTER EMPIRE

In the interwar years the MCOs became the nucleus around which Muslim public life revolved. At least on paper they embodied liberal principles of legal equality and civil rights. MCO executive councils and other offices were constituted through democratic elections in which all adult Muslim men, literate in Turkish or Bulgarian, had the right to vote. This was in the spirit of the League of Nations' commitment to acknowledge limited self-determination for groups that did not belong to the hegemonic nation by advancing legal measures to protect minorities while "accept[ing] the nation-state as the norm in international relations."⁴³ Elected candidates, however, had to be approved by the chief *müftü* and the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs, a provision that often hindered the free nature of the election process.⁴⁴ In addition to sanctioning all elections, the MFCA often meddled in MCO affairs especially when Muslims invoked the ministry's authority to resolve their intercommunal battles. Hence MCOs became sites of constant ideological and, not less importantly, personal confrontations among Muslims claiming community leadership.⁴⁵

In 1934, Iusein Iuseinov, a former head of the MCO-Yambol, wrote to the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs, to the head of the Burgas province, and to the mayor of the city of Yambol that "[o]ur organization [MCO-Yambol] is religious, it needs intelligent people, not Tura-

⁴³ Mark Mazower, "Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe," *Daedalus* 126, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 47–63, here 51.

⁴⁴ See sample lists for 1929 TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 34, l. 4–22.

⁴⁵ See for example, TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 423, l. 49, 58–61.

nists and other ignorant people. Thanks to our organization we keep our faith and good morality among the Turks. Besides, there are properties to be managed. For this we need educated people, people who have proven their honesty and loyalty to the religion.”⁴⁶

Few days later Ismail Saidov, the chief of the MCO-Yambol, sent a letter to the MFCA, to the head of the Burgas province, and to the chief *müftü*. In it Saidov claimed that Iuseinov and the previous leadership had misappropriated money, thus losing the trust of the people. Saidov emphasized that he was not motivated by partisanship and concluded that the current leadership “governed for the good of our fellow nationals [*sünarodnitsi*] and to serve the Bulgarian state.”⁴⁷ The Office of the Chief Müftü followed up with its own correspondence with the MFCA in which it explained that “the financial condition of the [MCO] has deteriorated considerably and is headed for the worse.”⁴⁸ It also showed that the MCO under Saidov’s leadership did not pay its dues to the office and routinely disobeyed it. According to the Office of the Chief Müftü, the root of all the trouble was the fact that the leadership of the MCO “had fallen under the influence of the Kemalists in the country.”⁴⁹ Consequently, the office requested the ministry to dismiss the MCO leadership headed by Saidov and to appoint other people, among whom was Iuseinov himself.

Broadly, this incident is indicative of the relationship between the Bulgarian government and the institutions officially sanctioned to represent Muslims. In exchange for political compliance, the Office of the Chief Müftü expected governmental support in combating secular, anticlerical, and Turkish nationalist sentiments among the Turkish Muslim population of Bulgaria.⁵⁰ For instance, a week after the 1923 coup, the chief *müftü* sent a telegram to all regional *müftüs* requesting that they tell “the Muslim population to remain calm. To obey governmental orders and to pursue, peacefully and quietly, its private affairs.”⁵¹ In October he urged them not to get involved in the communist demonstrations against the coup, reminding them that the state protected “the freedom, honor, and property of

⁴⁶ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 115, l. 11.

⁴⁷ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 115, l. 10.

⁴⁸ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 115, l. 1.

⁴⁹ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 115, l. 1.

⁵⁰ See E. Boyar and K. Fleet, “A Dangerous Axis: The ‘Bulgarian Müftü,’ the Turkish Opposition and the Ankara Government, 1928–1936,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 5 (2008): 775–89.

⁵¹ TsDIA, f. 471 k, op. 3, a. e. 5, l. 1.

Bulgarian citizens” regardless of “faith” and “ethnicity [*narodnost*].”⁵² The Office of the Chief Müftü articulated a discourse of protecting religion that became especially useful to that institution after the 1934 coup when associations for the protection of religion were established but most other forms of political mobilization among Muslims were driven underground. A couple of months after that coup, Reshad Zekirov (a member of the MCO-Yambol) claimed that pressure by “Turanist” members prevented him from forming an “association for the protection of religion” and stressed to the MFCA as well as to the mayor of Yambol his right to freedom of religious expression.⁵³ The newspaper *Medeniyet* even published a short piece warning Muslims not to believe rumors that if they became association members, they would not be able to travel to Turkey. *Medeniyet* condemned such rumors as “malicious [*garazkâr*] propaganda.”⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the Bulgarian authorities expected the chief müftü not to meddle in their effort to stop Kemalist propaganda among the Pomaks by attempting their “reintegration” into the national fold, mostly through education.⁵⁵ This perilous alliance created awkward diplomatic situations for Bulgarian governments, which periodically clamped down anti-Kemalist activities in response to Turkish diplomatic pressure.⁵⁶

Iuseinov’s success was in no small part due to his skillful navigation of the diverging fears and interests of the Office of the Chief Müftü as well as the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs. Both competed with Kemalist sympathizers in Bulgaria for the allegiance of the Turkish Muslim population. For the chief müftü this was a question of having the authority to circumscribe and lead the Muslim community at a time when the institutional framework of Ottoman Sunni Islam was being dissolved in the Turkish bureaucracy and the articulation of Turkish national identity hinged on disavowing Islam, at least in its Ottoman incarnation.⁵⁷ Bul-

⁵² Ibid., l. 2–4.

⁵³ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 115, l. 7.

⁵⁴ “Müslüman kardeşlerimizin nazar dikkatına” [To the attention of our Muslim brothers], *Medeniyet*, 22, 14 May 1934.

⁵⁵ Mila Mancheva, “Image and Policy: The Case of Turks and Pomaks in Inter-war Bulgaria, 1918–1944 (with Special Reference to Education),” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 12, no. 3 (2001): 355–74. Turkish Kemalist sympathizers in Bulgaria had certainly noticed this trend already in the 1920s. See, for instance, “Milli yaralar” [National wounds], *Deliorman* 119, 16 February 1925.

⁵⁶ Boyar and Fleet, “A Dangerous Axis,” 786.

⁵⁷ See Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?* (London: Routledge, 2006).

garian authorities, especially after the 1934 coup, viewed men like Saidov as defying official efforts to mold the country's Muslim population into a compliant minority. As the Shumen police inspector noted in 1935, "if we allow them [the Turks] to become nationally conscious, our problems will only increase."⁵⁸ As for Iuseinov and Saidov, both insisted on caring for the Muslim community and on their loyalty as Bulgarian citizens. Iuseinov did so by showing affinity with the chief *müftü* as an educated Muslim man and with the MFCa by presenting himself as financially responsible administrator. Saidov claimed honesty, competence, and lack of partisanship. Importantly, these claims went well with the authoritarian political culture after the 1934 coup and the subsequent consolidation of the royal dictatorship. An important feature of this culture was ostensibly advancing expertise and promoting national interests over the political squabbles of parliamentary democracy.⁵⁹

Iuseinov and Saidov fought so bitterly over the management of MCO-Yambol primarily because MCOs had a huge bearing on all the major issues that preoccupied Turkish Muslims. The leadership of any MCO shaped Turkish school curricula, influenced appointments of teachers, school boards, preachers, Quran readers, even the maintenance staff of mosques and schools, and decided on the lease or sale of *vakıf* properties. Beyond a power struggle for administrative control, the Iuseinov-Saidov incident reveals the profound ideological disagreements among Bulgaria's Muslims. The "Turanists" to whom Iuseinov referred or the "Kemalists" in the terminology of the chief *müftü* were broadly interested in educational and social modernization among Bulgaria's Muslim population. Their views were often expressed in the newspapers *Deliorman*⁶⁰ and *Rehber*, which regularly published articles on the modernization project in neighboring Turkey and its relation to Muslims in Bulgaria. Smaller newspapers like *Turan* unapologetically endorsed the Kemalist project. Political organizations like *Turan*, for instance, were devoted to mobilizing the Turkish Muslim population of Bulgaria on a nationalist, modernizing agenda.⁶¹ On the other hand, *Medeniyet*, which expressed the positions of the Office of the Chief *Müftü*, became a staunch opponent of the importation or adaptation of Kemalist ideas

⁵⁸ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 423, l. 24.

⁵⁹ Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto Obshtestvo 1878–1939 (Tom 1)*, 216–26.

⁶⁰ Named after the region in northeastern Bulgaria which was home to a great number of Turkish Muslims.

⁶¹ Gruev, "Bŭlgarite miusiulmani," 218–27.

into Bulgaria. *Medeniyet* enjoyed official state backing and had a practical monopoly on the Turkish reading public after the 1934 coup. A couple of entwined questions proved especially contentious among supporters and detractors of Kemalism because they touched the core of Muslims' self-identifications: 1) Which alphabet should be used for the Turkish language: Arabo-Persian or modified Latin?; 2) What role should Islam and clerics play in the lives of Bulgaria's Muslims?⁶²

Conflicts over these two issues occurred both in print as well as in the MCOs, thereby involving the various branches of the Bulgarian government. After the May 1934 coup and the subsequent royal dictatorship established in 1935, most newspapers, organizations, and parties were banned or driven underground. Yet even before the coup the Ministry of the Interior in the coalition government of the People's Block (1931–34) had charged the State Press Service to monitor the periodicals of all national minorities.⁶³ Accordingly, the police kept files on Turkish-language newspapers and journals, and classified them as “Young Turk/Kemalist,” “Old Turk” (grouping the adversaries of the Young Turks movement before the war as well as those who were opposed to Kemalist Turkey), or “independent.”⁶⁴ Newspapers that published materials mobilizing Turkish national identification were scrutinized and sometimes sanctioned. The Ministry of the Interior, for example, considered charging the Vidin-based Turkish language newspaper *Istikbal* with antistate activities for an article published on 20 December 1933 which called on Turkish youths in Bulgaria to unite, look to the future, and become one nation.⁶⁵ A couple of years later, the chief police inspector of Shumen, Mr. Kostov, shared intelligence that some of the more prominent members of the organization Turan traveled to Istanbul with the Bulgaria-based correspondent of the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic) and even conspired to shut down the newspaper *Medeniyet*.⁶⁶

The alphabet question was ultimately about the values to be inculcated in Turkish Muslim school children and hence the direction of

⁶² Mary Neuburger's book *The Orient Within* analyzes the conflicts among Muslims as well as their clashes with the Bulgarian authorities over emblematic features of clothing among Bulgaria's Muslims like the *turban*, *fez*, *shalvar*, and the various forms of veiling.

⁶³ TsDIA, f. 370k op. 2, a. e. 1452, l. 7.

⁶⁴ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 2 contains about forty individual files.

⁶⁵ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 2, a. e. 1673, l. 6.

⁶⁶ TsDIA, f. 370k, op. 6, a. e. 423, l. 25 (6 September 1935).

modern Muslim subjectivity. On 14 October 1931 eight men from the district of Kürdzhalı sent a telegram to the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, to the *müftü* of the town of Karlovo, and to parliamentary representatives from southern Bulgaria.⁶⁷ In it the men protested that Lütfi Takanov (Takanoglu), who was the chair of the Turkish school board in Kürdzhalı, banned the Arabo-Persian script for the Turkish language as well as the study of the Holy Quran and religious instruction. They characterized the introduction of the modified Latin script as breach of their “religious and constitutional rights that are available to every Bulgarian citizen.” In the same year people from two villages in the southeastern Haskovo district and another village in the northeastern district of Provadia protested the introduction of the modified Latin alphabet. They demanded that the rights of the villages’ Muslim residents be protected.⁶⁸ Apparently Takanov also planned on mixing boys and girls in the upper classes. A copy of the telegram reached the Office of the Chief Müftü as well, prompting an investigation.⁶⁹

Acting Chief Müftü Hafız Ahmedov (Şumnulu Hafız Ahmet) must have been aware of the issue earlier because Takanov had sent a letter in November 1930 to the educational inspector of the Turkish schools in the Mastanlı province as well as to the district chief of Egri-Dere, which was forwarded to the Office of the Chief Müftü.⁷⁰ Takanov’s letter explained that Hasan Hilmiev, who used to be the Mastanlı district *müftü* but was demoted to the position of assistant to the *müftü* of Egri-Dere, visited Kürdzhalı several times “to blemish the reputation of the teachers and to criticize the school curriculum that was approved by the Ministry of Education.” According to Takanov, Hilmiev gave mosque sermons in which he falsely accused the school of not teaching the Quran and the Muslim creed, even though Hafız Tefvik Kadirov had been hired precisely for this purpose. According to the Office of the Chief Müftü, the Turkish school in Kürdzhalı offered religious studies simply because it was required to do so by law, while in reality the school board had embraced secularism and was committed to following the reforms being carried out in Turkey. Moreover, the board also apparently called Turkey “mother country [*anavatan*]”⁷¹ in front of the Mastanlı school inspector. Turkey,

⁶⁷ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 41, l. 115–16.

⁶⁸ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 3, a. e. 10.

⁶⁹ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 41, l. 117–18.

⁷⁰ Ibid., l. 113–13 g., 121–21 g.

⁷¹ Ibid., l. 113 g.

the chief *müftü* noted in his letter to the Ministry of Education, “[h]as republican form of government that has accepted the secular principle and does not show respect for any religion whatsoever. The Kürdzhali school board declares and professes that the principles of the Turkish reforms in all spheres of life are the principles that the board accepts and professes and that it is a board subordinate to the secular Turkish state.”⁷² Hence, he concluded, the school board was “atheist [*bezverno*]” and thus “from religious point of view” was subject to discharge. Within few days Acting Chief Müftü Ahmedov informed the Ministry of Education that the board would be dismissed and a temporary one would be formed until proper elections for the school board could be held. He forwarded three names to the ministry and requested its approval.⁷³

Clearly the chief *müftü* mistrusted the school curriculum and did not believe that the religious instruction offered at the Turkish school in Kürdzhali expressed genuine religious belief and practice. His swift move to dismiss the board may seem like an overreaction. Placed, however, in the context of Muslim reform in Bulgaria as well as in the context of the revolutionary changes in Turkey, the actions of the office point to its precarious position: it was competing with Turkey for leadership of Bulgaria’s Muslims. Domestically, in 1926 the Turkish Muslim reading room (*kirathaane*) “Şefkat” in Vidin (northwestern Bulgaria) had explicitly favored the study of natural and social sciences at the expense of religious instruction.⁷⁴ Şefkat existed thanks to a donation by the brothers Halil and Ibrahim Efendi Ahmedbegov, who were prosperous merchants in Vidin. In 1896 they donated their wealth to the establishment of a *vakıf* consisting of valuable real estate in town and agricultural land in a nearby village as well as a reading room that was charged with helping Vidin Muslims to study in local schools or in institutions of higher education abroad, particularly in law, medicine, and other professions beneficial to Muslims. Şefkat’s board described the reading room as a place that promoted “Muslim secular education and applicable knowledge according to the model of the most cultured European nations.”⁷⁵ Şefkat began granting scholarships, funding the studies of seventy male and female students in Bulgaria, other European countries, as well as Turkey between 1909 and 1940.⁷⁶ Even the daugh-

⁷² Ibid., I. 117 g.

⁷³ Ibid., I. 118, 120.

⁷⁴ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 121, I. 26–27.

⁷⁵ Ibid., I. 6.

⁷⁶ Methodieva, “Reform, Politics, and Culture,” 295.

ter of one of Şefkat's board members, Muazzez Bey Mehmedova, went to study medicine in Berlin in the 1920s.⁷⁷ This was an example of corruption according to Mehmed Dzhelilov (Celil), chief of the Department of Religious and Vakıf Affairs (at MFCA). Ivan Stoianov, inspector in the Department of Religious Affairs (at MFCA) concurred. Both officials insisted that Muazzez's father Rasim received an unnecessarily high salary, that her education was too expensive, and that she had abandoned her studies after joining communists and bolsheviks in Germany.

Even more bothersome to Dzhelilov and Stoianov was the wealth of the *vakıf*, which could support an agenda contrary to the Office of the Chief Müftü. And to complicate matters further the trustees of the *vakıf* persistently refused until 1940 to hand over the management of the endowment properties to the MCO-Vidin as required by the Statute. Not only that but in 1938 the Vidin *müftü* apparently attended a memorial service in the Yahya Pasha mosque in Vidin which ended up as a memorial service for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.⁷⁸ Şefkat's unapologetic promotion of secular education that advanced a conception of Muslim community that looked to Europe and to Kemalist Turkey undermined the authority of the religious establishment as well as the Bulgarian government that supported it.⁷⁹

The fears of the Office of the Chief Müftü only grew as Kemalist sympathizers tried to take control of MCOs, particularly after the introduction of the modified Latin script for the Turkish language in Turkey in 1928, which was soon adopted in many Turkish schools in Bulgaria.⁸⁰ With the appointment of Hüseyin Hüsnü as acting chief *müftü* the conflicts over the Kemalist project among Bulgaria's Turkish Muslims intensified.⁸¹ Until the Second World War the MFCA appointed acting chief *müftüs*, thus disregarding the provisions of the Statute which called on district *müftüs* to elect a person to the Office of the Chief Müftü.⁸² Enjoying a long tenure, Hüsnü actively worked to marginalize Turkish Muslim clerics and teachers who promoted the Kemalist reforms in Bulgaria. Until his replacement in 1936, Chief Müftü Hüsnü had established a network of anti-Kemalist émigrés based in Sofia and used the newspaper *Medeniyet* in his campaign

⁷⁷ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 121, l. 39 g.

⁷⁸ Ibid., l. 13, 26–28, 40, 43–44, 61–68. The reading room had lent to MCO-Vidin 200,000 *levs* in 1923, which the former could not repay.

⁷⁹ Ibid., l. 62–64.

⁸⁰ Keskiöglu, *Bulgaristan'da Türkler*, 20.

⁸¹ Ibid., 22–24; Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 114–15.

⁸² Keskiöglu, *Bulgaristan'da Türkler*, 43.

against the republican regime in Turkey. He was instrumental in setting up a society for the protection of Islam (Din-i İslam Müdafileri Cemiyeti) in 1933 as a way to counteract Turkish national mobilization.⁸³ Furthermore, Hüsnü helped opponents to Kemalist Turkey, including members of the so-called Yüzellilikler.⁸⁴

The Yüzellilikler were 150 Turkish citizens who were accused of anti-Kemalist activities, officially exiled in 1924 from the Turkish Republic, and stripped of their citizenship in 1927. Limited amnesty followed in 1938, shortly before Mustafa Kemal's death, though some of his most outspoken critics decided not to return.⁸⁵ Even less prominent adversaries of the Ankara government found asylum in Bulgaria, sometimes seeking the intercession of the Office of the Chief Müftü in their efforts to acquire both a position in the religious hierarchy as well as Bulgarian citizenship.⁸⁶ The Office of the Chief Müftü had limited resources to help such men, but the office moved swiftly against men like Hafız İsmail (Salimov) Hakkı for acting against "the precepts of the religion and religious morality."⁸⁷ He was fired in May 1938 from his posts as imam and reader of the Holy Quran as well as chair of the MCO in the village of Dolni Dübür. Hakkı was also a teacher, a founding convener of the first Turkish Teachers Congress in 1906, a supporter of the Latin script, a contributor to several Turkish-language newspapers in Bulgaria, and according to his contemporary religious scholar Osman Keskiöğlu, a moderate who took to heart the interests of the Turkish nation and disliked the divisions among Bulgaria's Turkish Muslims.⁸⁸

Hakkı's transgressions, according to the Vice-Acting Chief Müftü Hafız Basri, consisted of having published a short booklet of poems that propagated Turkish nationalism, an action contrary "to the morality of the Muslim religion which stands for erasing national differences among people."⁸⁹ This statement echoes the staunch anti-Turkish nationalism views of former Sheykh ul-Islam Mustafa Sabri Efendi who was one of

⁸³ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁴ Boyar and Fleet, "A Dangerous Axis," 778.

⁸⁵ Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011), 33–37; Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic*, 111; Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 77–78.

⁸⁶ TsDIA, f. 166k, op. 2, a. e. 117, l. 34, 36.

⁸⁷ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 3, a. e. 6, l. 1.

⁸⁸ Keskiöğlu, *Bulgaristan'da Türkler*, 185.

⁸⁹ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 3, a. e. 6, l. 1.

the 150 exiles and who tried to reach Muslims in the Balkans from his base in Xanthi, Greece.⁹⁰ To stress to the MFCA how important it was to ban Hakkı from holding any administrative position in Bulgaria, the vice-acting chief *müftü* included selected translations containing lines such as “The Turkish language is my language/The Turkish nation is my nation,” “Turan is my fatherland,” “We are the children of Oğuz,” “The Turkish nation is big, great.” He also enclosed a copy of the booklet, titled *Türk, Turan yahud Anayüirt, Özvatan* (Turk, Turan or Motherland, True Fatherland) written in the Arabo-Persian script and published in 1928 in Shumen by the Terakki (Progress) Publishing House.⁹¹

Perhaps more frightening to the Office of the Chief Müftü was the fact that Hakkı wrote poems that employed his religious sentiments of devotion to God to express his love of nation and learning. In the preface to the book he presented his poems as a product of love for “my religion, my nation, my country, my students [*dinim, milletim, vatanım, talebem*]” as well as his strong desire to serve them.⁹² In addition to writing a morning and an evening prayer in plain Turkish, with instructions on how to perform the latter, which was ahead of similar efforts in republican Turkey, he also composed poems titled “The Religion of the Turks” (“*Türklerin Dini*”), “Confidence” (“*Emniyet*”), “The Road of the Believers” (“*Mü’minlerin Yolu*”).⁹³ In these poems, Hakkı confessed and confirmed his belief “with language and heart” in God while also urging his fellow Turks to recognize that Islam was their religion, and this at a time when Islam stopped being the official religion in Turkey. He also urged his readers not to spend excessive time on devotion, rather to use their energies to work, to go to school, to unite, and to expand their horizons. His poems betray a sense of urgency about education. Time moved forward, he wrote, and the world bypassed those who neglect learning: “sweet, sweet honey that flows/no one looks at [in the sense of no one waits for] the ignorant ones.”⁹⁴

Hakkı’s poems exhibit common nationalist, and more broadly, modernist ideas. His attempt to fuse religious with national sentiment can be

⁹⁰ Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic*, 111.

⁹¹ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 3, a. e. 6, l. 2–3, 4–11 g.

⁹² Ibid., l. 11. “İçimdeki sevdanın zoruyla emeleme hizmet etmek!”

⁹³ Ibid., l. 4–7, 9–10. On the controversy over prayers in Turkish, see Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic*.

⁹⁴ TsDIA, f. 471 k, op. 3, a. e. 5, l. 6; the poem is titled “Tatlı Bal” and the last two lines go like this: “Tatlı, tatlı bal akar / Cahillere kim bakar!”

regarded as a middle-of-the road position between supporters and adversaries of the secularization of the Ottoman-cum-Turkish society. He was not alone among Bulgaria's Turkish Muslims in trying to strike a middle ground. In a rather conciliatory tone, for example, members of parliament from the city of Ruse and from the town of Preslav wrote a letter to *Rehber* in 1929 in which they explained that the Latin alphabet did not concern religion at all.⁹⁵ The real issue, they opined, was the future of the young, those students who graduated from school without knowledge of the new alphabet for the Turkish language; keeping them "behind a curtain is not right." Nonetheless, antagonisms over the meanings of knowledge and purpose of education were pervasive because while Bulgaria's Turkish Muslims debated they became entangled with the question of whether one accepted or rejected the transformation of Ottoman Muslims into Turks in early republican Turkey. Did one look for inspiration in the defunct Ottoman Empire? Or did one look for guidance in the Turkey that Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and his followers were creating? Did one belong to a putatively universal Muslim community, *cemiyet*, or to the Turkish nation, *Türk milleti*? Was the Office of the Chief Müftü to set the agenda and lead Muslims or other people/organizations?

THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE *CEMIYET* AND *MILLET*

The question of leadership was ideological as well as generational. In an article titled "If We Aspire to Life," published in 1925 in the newspaper *Deliorman*, Alyanakzade (pen name of Mustafa Şerif Alyanak) opened with a dramatic paragraph: "Nowadays the Turk in Bulgaria is left in a sack of injustice, which reminds me of an abandoned and orphaned caravan. The wind blazes this poor caravan, people frighten it with fists, this faithless sack is so unlucky and the traveler is so weak."⁹⁶ Impressing upon its readers' feelings of loss and fragility, this paragraph is followed by more disturbing questions betraying a general sense of confusion and anxiety in the midst of the Turks' journey. Living in ignorance and poverty with a bleak future in sight, the author continued, many "sicknesses" and their cures had been pointed out, but neither the diagnosis nor the treatment achieved the desired reform. There were a couple of reasons for this,

⁹⁵ *Rehber* 59, 5 February 1929.

⁹⁶ "Yaşamak İstiyorsak" [If we aspire to life], *Deliorman* 137, 26 May 1925.

according to Alyanakzade. First, “we still reach out to the young [*gençler*], who are selfish, ignorant, and without conscience.” Second, against the “knowledge and civilization of the West,” its “power” and “influence,” “we sell knowledge that consists of memorization.” To advance, all those who are responsible and conscientious—intellectuals and leaders (*rehberlerimiz*) alike—need to unite in order to fill the current “journey [*yolculuk*]” with meaning and “heal with sincerity”; the good results would follow, Alyanakzade concluded his article.

Suffused with such tropes as journey, traveler, road, guide (*rehber*), Alyanakzade’s piece echoes broader questions about mobilizing Turkish Muslims as a minority around a specific agenda. Originally from Vidin, Mustafa Şerif Alyanak was a teacher of the new method (i.e., not rote memorization) who trained teachers for the Turkish schools.⁹⁷ He also took part in the organization of Turkish Muslim young men and women in sports and educational clubs that proliferated in the 1920s and early 1930s.⁹⁸ His opponents from the newspaper *Medeniyet* described him as ignorant, disrespectful of Islam, and also immoral for apparently having abandoned his family after eloping with a female student of his in Pleven and subsequently fleeing to Turkey.⁹⁹ By 1926, despite tensions among the clubs from different cities, they had coalesced into the umbrella association called Turan. It was officially registered in the Ministry of the Interior in 1927 as a sports and educational association.¹⁰⁰ Turan (like other youth organizations in interwar Europe) focused on building the bodies and shaping the minds of young Turkish Muslims through exercise, work, and modern knowledge, ultimately nurturing Turkish national consciousness. Both men and women could be members. They wore distinct uniforms (pants for men, skirts for women) with a combination of white, green, and dark blue colors as well as a hat.¹⁰¹ Five years later, in 1932, the newspaper *Turan* published an article, titled “On the New Road,” which argued that the reforms taking place in Turkey were being “transferred [*nakl*]” to Bulgaria, but to ensure success Turks had to unite, and local Turan branches had to play a central role in this process.¹⁰² The newspaper

⁹⁷ Keskiöğlu, *Bulgaristan’da Türkler*, 82, 193.

⁹⁸ Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 72–73; Keskiöğlu, *Bulgaristan’da Türkler*, 114.

⁹⁹ “Alyanak kimdir?” [Who is Alyanak?], *Medeniyet* 24, 4 June 1934.

¹⁰⁰ Gruev, “Bulgarite miusiulmani,” 218–27.

¹⁰¹ Keskiöğlu, *Bulgaristan’da Türkler*, 115; Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 75; Gruev, “Bulgarite miusiulmani,” 220.

¹⁰² “Yeni yolda” [On the new road], *Turan* 8, 1 August 1932.

Turan explained in the following year that the organization *Turan* was not a mere local embodiment of Kemalist ideology, but rather “the Mecca of enlightenment [*nur*] and civilization [*medeniyet*] for Turkish youth around the world.”¹⁰³

The above statement, Keskiöğlu argued, was partly intended to refute claims that *Turan* was an extension of Kemalist Turkey.¹⁰⁴ Partly, though, characterizing *Turan* in Bulgaria as a meeting point for Turks reflects its sources of inspiration and influence, notably the pan-Turkist vision of the late Ottoman/early republican intellectual Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924). His concept of *Turan* linked culturally and linguistically the Turks of Anatolia and Central Asia, the latter of course were under Russian and Soviet sovereignty.¹⁰⁵ Affinity with this idea made sense for Bulgaria’s Turkish Muslims living as a minority in a Christian state whose borders were fixed by international treaties.

Underscoring that the organization *Turan* would serve as a nucleus of enlightenment and civilization was also a strategy employed by Kemalist sympathizers in Bulgaria to counter claims about their disregard for the multilayered history that had shaped Turkish Muslims. In fact, the same series of articles in *Medeniyet* which compared Mustafa Kemal with Hülegü Khan argued that Kemalism had no monopoly on how Muslims should live in the modern age because Kemalism fed on ignorance. The very ostensible likeness between the two men was meant to demonstrate that Kemalists failed to promote progress and civilization. In the course of the comparison the main argument of the articles comes to the fore: “the Islamic religion/the Muslim world [*İslamiyet*]” is compatible with “progress” and generative of “civilization” that is known for its scientific as well as artistic knowledge and accomplishments throughout the world.¹⁰⁶ Importantly, the criticism in the *Medeniyet* articles unfolds by refusing to impute modernity solely to Kemalists; on the contrary, by asserting the long-standing progressiveness of Islamic civilization, *Medeniyet* claimed the prerogative to decide what modernity would require of Muslims. The second installment of the historical comparison opposed the replace-

¹⁰³ Quoted in Keskiöğlu, *Bulgaristan’da Türkler*, 123.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 122–24.

¹⁰⁵ In 1911 he published a poem entitled “*Turan*” in the Salonika (Thessaloniki) newspaper *Rumeli*; see Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, trans. (and annotated) Robert Devereux (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 9n3. His essay “*Turkism and Turanism*,” 17–21, lays out his views.

¹⁰⁶ “Hülegü Khan – Mustafa Kemal Paşa,” *Medeniyet* 22, 14 May 1934.

ment of the Arabo-Persian with the modified Latin script. “Kemal the destroyer,” the article began, “imitated [*taklid*]” practices from abroad and dictatorially banned the Arabic letters even though the Quran, the Hadith, and the foundations of Muslim canonical jurisprudence were penned in Arabic.¹⁰⁷ The main problem of the entire “script revolution [*yazı inkılabı*],” the article continued, was the fact that it disconnected millions of people from their “glorious history and national literature.” Moreover, the Kemalists ignored the fact that numerous Turkish works were written in the Arabic alphabet. They ultimately aimed to alter *İslamiyet*; and particularly irksome, the article hinted, was that they attempted to do so by circumventing the authority of the ulema as the custodians of Islam and so responsible for any change they perceived to be related to that religion.¹⁰⁸ Deploying a rhetoric of protecting tradition, the Office of the Chief Müftü, the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs, and the police fought against the new script from the late 1920s until the mid- to late 1930s.¹⁰⁹

The heated conflicts over the new script intensified thanks to the continuous smuggling of Latin typesets from Turkey as well as Turkish financial support for newspapers like *Deliorman* and *Turan*.¹¹⁰ *Turan* was almost exclusively published in the modified Latin script. And while the chief müftü condemned the adoption of the Latin script for disconnecting Muslims from their Islamic civilization and for encouraging atheism, those who supported the new alphabet saw in it not disconnection but reconnection, as well as recognition of the culture of the Turks.¹¹¹ For example, in a 1928 editorial titled “The New Script,” *Rehber* insisted that the Arabic alphabet was essentially an imposition while the Latin alphabet embodied and expressed Turkish national culture.¹¹²

Turan grew in membership quickly, boasting ninety-five branches throughout the country by the time the organization was disbanded after the 1934 coup.¹¹³ Its members also included religious officials from different ranks, like Abdullah Sıdkı Devcioğlu, for instance, who served as

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ I owe this formulation to M. Q. Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), whose study analyzes the rise of the ulema to political importance in the modern world by carving for themselves a role as guardians of change.

¹⁰⁹ See Mancheva, “Image and Policy,” *passim*.

¹¹⁰ Boyar and Fleet, “A Dangerous Axis,” 783–84.

¹¹¹ TsDIA, f. 471k, op. 1, a. e. 41, l. 117–18.

¹¹² “Yeni Yazı” [The new script], *Rehber* 42, 1928.

¹¹³ Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 78.

müftü in Ruse and Razgrad and helped found a Turan branch in Razgrad. For this he incurred the wrath of Chief Müftü Hüsnü. In 1938 Devcioğlu was appointed to the post,¹¹⁴ which helps explain why the staunch opposition to the modified Latin alphabet for Turkish subsided gradually. There were other organizations that also rivaled for the hearts and minds of the Turkish youth. One of the more prominent ones, which also aroused the fears of the Bulgarian police, was the nationalist organization Altın Ordu (Golden Army), founded in Shumen in 1927 by Hüseyin Hacı Ali Topuz upon his return from Germany. Its stated goal was to protect the nationality, religion, and history of the Turks. Topuz was branded as a Kemalist, likely by Osman Nuri (one of the 150 exiles), and the organization was eventually shut down.¹¹⁵ Not only Turan and Altın Ordu were officially disbanded for serving as mouthpieces of Turkish propaganda but also the Şefkat reading room in Vidin. Nonetheless, the Bulgarian police were well aware that political activities continued secretly in coffee shops, mosques, markets, and schools. Especially in the Rhodope region, Kürdzhali in particular, men traversed the borderland between Bulgaria and Turkey, disseminating news and ideas while also keeping in touch with the Turkish consul in Plovdiv.¹¹⁶

Yet, even Turkish Muslims who were enthusiastic to adapt to Bulgaria the revolutionary changes occurring in Turkey worried about disconnection from fundamental cultural practices that had continuously bound them together. Ranging from excitement in the mid-1920s to nervousness about loss of identity in the 1930s, talks and appeals aimed at young Turkish Muslim men and women betrayed anxiety about the possibilities of Kemalism traveling to Bulgaria. Alyanakzade wrote in *Deliorman* that sports clubs served as a springboard for the discussion of important political ideas while providing a healthy, moral, and vibrant environment for preparing Turks on the road to modernity: “[T]he youth we want today is a knowledgeable, healthy and idealistic youth which grasps our contemporary needs.... [I]t is our obligation to encourage our youth in the clean and innocent way it has taken.”¹¹⁷ *Deliorman*, however, also published articles

¹¹⁴ Keskiöğlu, *Bulgaristan’da Türkler*, 166–67.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 124–25; Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 77. Osman Nuri is not to be confused with Osman Nuri Peremeci from Shumen who was a teacher and the author of several textbooks for the Turkish schools in Bulgaria. See Keskiöğlu’s short biographical entry on him in *Bulgaristan’da Türkler*, 180–81.

¹¹⁶ TsDIA, f. 264k, op. 1, a. e. 31, l. 3, 3 g.

¹¹⁷ Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 72.

by those who were distressed that in an effort to follow progress, Turkish youths had started to feel ashamed of their own culture.¹¹⁸ A 1930 editorial in *Rehber*, titled “Youth,” feared that the expectation placed on Turkish young men to lead the transition to new times was paved with slippery stones and traps. Foreign ideas and material gains were dangerously seductive, like “coquettish women who lean out of their windows” to lure men with “smells” and “mysterious drinks.” A minority of Turkish Muslims took this decadent way, the author warned, and “trampled down their mothers and fathers, mistreated their fellow townspeople,” demonstrating painfully the need for “integrity [*istikamet*].”¹¹⁹ Integrity was to be achieved through secular knowledge (*bilgi*) and through continuous work (*daima çalışmak*) within formal and informal educational fora under the guidance of competent teachers, who, significantly, were also respectful of religion.

The feelings of confusion, angst, and ambivalence that circumscribed much of the experience of the modern age in interwar Europe did not stem among Bulgaria’s Turkish Muslims primarily from disillusionment with modernity and pessimism about progress.¹²⁰ Instead, those Muslim Turks in Bulgaria who sympathized with the Kemalist modernization project worried about adopting its secular and nationalist ideas without alienating “uncommitted” Muslims or provoking self-denigration and feelings of inferiority to the hegemonic Bulgarians or Europe. Emphasizing hard work and education as opposed to superficial imitation of Western practices, articles like those in *Rehber* in fact affirmed modernization and echoed efforts across the border to advance a particular version of Turkish modernity, which looked both to the West (Europe) and, in the early 1930s, also to the East (the Soviet Union).¹²¹

The appeasing attitude in the *Rehber* “New Script” article above stands in contrast to the general tone of *Turan* as well as of *Medeniyet*. In 1932, probably in reference to the developing official history in Turkey, Ahmet Gültekin, cofounder and writer for *Turan*, urged Turks in Bul-

¹¹⁸ *Deliorman* 122, February 1925.

¹¹⁹ “Gençlik” [Youth], *Rehber* 108, 8 February 1930.

¹²⁰ R. Griffin, “Tunnel Visions and Mysterious Trees: Modernist Projects of National and Racial Regeneration, 1880–1939,” in “*Blood and Homeland*”: *Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940*, ed. P. Weindling and M. Turda (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007).

¹²¹ Samuel J. Hirst, “Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet–Turkish Convergence in the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 72, no. 1 (2013): 32–54.

garia to take their place among the secular civilizations by embracing their Turkishness.¹²² In the following year, *Medeniyet* published an editorial, written in a confrontational tone, that argued that all the agitation in the Turkish language press about renewal (*yenilik*) and unity (*birlik*) was empty talk, because only the words of the Holy Quran had staying power. Whoever accepted the words of God and the authority of the book “remained a Muslim,” whoever did not accept them should “leave the Muslim community [*Müslüman cemaati*].”¹²³

Medeniyet’s dismissive commentary exposes how polarized Bulgaria’s Muslims were in the interwar years. Its overbearing tone is also indicative of the official support that this newspaper and the Office of the Chief Müftü enjoyed while their opponents were suspected of disloyalty to the Bulgarian state, as we saw both in this and in the previous chapter. The police inspector of Shumen had in fact explicitly recommended that “old religiously fanatical teachers [*hocas*]” be preferred for teaching positions due to their unequivocal anti-Kemalism.¹²⁴ That this support was not unconditional is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that Devcioğlu became chief *müftü* in 1938 and promoted the modified Latin script in complete reversal of Hüsnü’s position on the matter. This change may have been prompted by diplomatic influence from Turkey. In 1935 the Turkish ambassador to Bulgaria had asked the Ministry of Foreign and Confessional Affairs to appoint “progressive persons rather than conservatives”¹²⁵ to the Office of the Chief Müftü. If indeed this request was consequential, it would have been so due to the shifting priorities of the Bulgarian state on the eve of the Second World War. The looming danger of another war put on the line Bulgaria’s ambitions for territorial adjustments in Thrace and Macedonia, especially because Bulgaria’s leaders viewed the other Balkan countries as isolating the country. In September 1933 Greece and Turkey guaranteed their common border in Thrace. And in the following year Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey signed the Balkan Pact by which they reaffirmed each other’s borders as set after the First World War and agreed to suspend their territorial

¹²² Ahmet Gültekin, “Yeni kuvvetlerle” [With new vigor], *Turan* (Kırcaali) 10, 1 October 1932.

¹²³ “Bir millet arasında birlik neyle temin edilir ve nasıl muhafaza olunur,” [How is unity of the community to be ensured and how is it to be protected] *Medeniyet* 26, 19 August 1933.

¹²⁴ TsDIA, f. 370к, op. 6, a. e. 423, l. 24.

¹²⁵ Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 115.

claims in the region.¹²⁶ Hence a more conciliatory attitude toward at least some of the Kemalist ideas circulating among Bulgaria's Muslims would not antagonize Turkey and its supporters in Bulgaria. Put differently, Bulgarian governments viewed Turkish Muslims as a national minority whose contours and content had to serve Bulgarian sovereignty.

To conclude, the urgent need to define what it meant materially and symbolically to be a Turkish Muslim in Bulgaria after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire is the underlying issue that ties together the three disputes discussed in this chapter: ownership of the Demir Baba Tekke, control over the MCOs, and the imagination of the Turkish community. Circumscribed as a national minority, Turkish Muslims straddled the Ottoman past and its representations in Bulgaria and Turkey while also holding onto imperial property to navigate the vicissitudes of the national present. Thus, conflicts over material remains from the Ottoman Empire, like the Demir Baba Tekke or *vakıfs* under MCO care, included not only struggles over financial resources but over what these properties symbolized. That is to say, emphasizing their Ottoman Islamic context charted a future for Turkish Muslims as members of a transnational religious community and civilization. On the other hand, viewing imperial properties as repositories of Turkish heritage that was older and historically richer than Islam paved a future for Turkish Muslims as a nation. These visions remained at odds for the period under study here and were suppressed in socialist Bulgaria, only to reemerge as poignant questions again in post-socialist Bulgaria where the rewriting of the Ottoman past is ongoing both in response to the pluralism advanced by the European Union and as a result of challenges to the Kemalist framework in Turkey.

¹²⁶ William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774–2000* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 61.

Conclusion

The history narrated in this book of how the symbolic and material transformation of land turned Ottoman Muslims into Bulgaria's Turkish national minority reveals more broadly that Bulgaria's political independence from the Ottoman Empire was bound with the country's dependence, particularly economically, on a few powerful European states. This dialectical relationship between national sovereignty and reliance on foreign capital is not exclusive to Bulgaria, but can also be detected in the other post-Ottoman Balkan states. It altered, in the country's primarily agricultural economy, land use and ownership thus shifting resources and power from Turkish Muslims to Bulgarian Christians. Because Muslim landownership signified imperial sovereignty, Turkish Muslims' social, political, and legal options, including emigration, invariably hinged on the relationship that statesmen in Eastern Rumelia and then Bulgaria developed with the Ottoman Empire and, subsequently, Turkey. The irredentist aspirations of Bulgarian statesmen over Ottoman Macedonia and Thrace crushed in the Second Balkan War and in the First World War, thereby redirecting efforts from acquiring territory to more systematic monitoring of Turkish Muslims and encouraging them to emigrate, especially those in the southern regions bordering Turkey. Meanwhile, statesmen promoted the settlement there of Bulgarian Christians from the interior of the country as well as refugees from Ottoman-cum-Turkish territory. Simply put, in the period between the two world wars Turkish Muslims indexed Turkish sovereignty as they had Ottoman between 1878 and World War I.

Since Bulgarian statesmen viewed Muslim lands as embodiments of imperial wealth that could be harnessed for state building, Muslim landownership became undesirable and, particularly in the border regions, a potential threat to Bulgarian sovereignty. Yet the historic transfer of resources from Turkish Muslims to Bulgarian Christians did not necessarily make the latter much richer in a country overburdened with debt, beholden to the demands of international creditors, and weakened by the global Great Depression. Statesmen hoped that the labor of Bulgarian Christians would make Muslim lands profitable but that labor was also squandered on an expanding army to pursue territorial ambitions that drained the country in the disastrous wars between 1912 and 1918. Furthermore, subsistence and small-scale agriculture prevailed in much of Bulgaria. Partly this was so because systematic efforts at land consolidation were not made until the late 1920s. Partly, though, Bulgarian Christian farmers valued the ownership of a piece of land more than high productivity. Farmers after the Russo-Ottoman War regarded land almost as an entitlement gained with the shift from actual to nominal Ottoman sovereignty. After the First World War, refugees from newly created Turkey viewed landownership as the way to integrate in their new Bulgarian homeland. In other words, rather than an economic resource generative of capital, land often became a compensatory measure for political failure and international crises. This compensatory approach framed Turkish Muslims—be they individual land owners or collective owners of *vakıf* properties—as holding onto something that was essentially Bulgarian, hence the imprint on them as burdensome vestiges of the imperial past.

Yet for Turkish Muslims the Ottoman past was not merely a burden in the Bulgarian national present. *Vakıfs*, despite their diminution and impoverishment, supported religion, culture, and education. Whoever controlled their wealth shaped the public life of Turkish Muslims. This is the reason Kemalist sympathizers and detractors fought so bitterly over them in interwar Bulgaria. Even with the stigma of backwardness, the Ottoman past was useful to both because it demonstrated the historical rootedness of Turkish Muslims in the land that Bulgarian Christians claimed to be exclusively theirs. To what degree and in what form that past was to define their lives remained an open question. Yet there was unspoken consensus that the Ottoman past had to provide Bulgaria's Muslim population with orientation after the empire's collapse and the emergence of the Turkish Republic. For some the fall of the empire served as warning that adapting to the "conditions of the new life" was needed

in order to avoid destruction similar to that experienced by the Mayan civilization in South America following colonization.¹ Others delineated a community of Muslims in the Bulgarian nation-state by trying to prevent Kemalist state building from changing Ottoman Muslim culture.

This deep polarization among Turkish Muslims over the Ottoman past also reflects the flaws of citizenship in the post–World War I era when the heterogeneity of the former dynastic empires was “accommodated” by a host of national minority regulations and protections which relied on the tacit understanding that a minority, like a nation, was bound and homogeneous. In political regimes based on representative government this conceptualization provoked numerous conflicts, such as, who had the authority to define the boundaries and content of a minority and, what was primary, group belonging or individual politicization. These incongruities stemmed in large measure from the fusion of the traditional religious categorization of Ottoman subjects with an ethnic one under the umbrella of representative government. This became first evident in the political model of Eastern Rumelia which rested on power sharing among ethno-religious groups that enjoyed the support of rival Great Powers and evolved through special regulations that continuously elaborated rules for conducting public life as a Turkish Muslim. Thus, a distinct communal space emerged that never fully integrated into the public life of Bulgarian Christians. It was up to the socialist regime after World War II to force national integration through an emphasis on class—both in historical writing and in state building—which ostensibly united a socialist citizenry evolving from feudal and capitalist oppression, but this story is the subject for another book.

¹ *Deliorman* 147, 14 August 1925.

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“Mirkova’s book provides a truly significant and original contribution to late Ottoman and early post-Ottoman Bulgarian (and, by extension, Balkan) history. It carries the reader through this transition, covering the before, the after, and offering rich detail on the very understudied province of Eastern Rumelia—which was a multi-ethnic and autonomous province that became part of the Bulgarian principality after 1885. This work makes a compelling case for the fact that land should be a central trope and subject for understanding changing identities (and Muslim-Christian relations) in this period. While most works on national identity focus on language and religion, *Muslim Land, Christian Labor* looks at how momentous changes in land use/ownership contributed to the formation of identities in modern Bulgaria. While territory is often cited as central to identity, here it is land use, ownership, appropriation, re-allocation that are explored as ways in which a variety of actors—from Bulgarian regimes to specific social groups—shaped or expressed identity in this period. Mirkova does an excellent job of integrating the voices and struggles of the Muslims of Bulgaria themselves (so often left out) into this complex story in which there are so many key actors.”

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